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## THE UNITY OF UNO

WHATEVER the private thoughts of statesmen, in public they are almost always radiant optimists, or, as we moderns say, wishful thinkers. We are not, therefore, surprised that the delegates to the first General Assembly of Uno have packed their bags and departed to their several nations amid a chorus of self-congratulation. M. Spaak, who presided over the General Assembly, is reported as saying that its first session has "enhanced the prospect of peace," and that the meetings of the Security Council have introduced a new era in diplomacy which also "makes for peace." Mr. Attlee, in his sober review at the farewell session of the Assembly, said: "In my view the success of these meetings has been very remarkable. Only those who put their expectations far too high will have experienced any disappointment."

We do not think that our own expectations were high, and we are therefore not disappointed, but we are unable to share this statesmanlike optimism, and we feel that there has been a good deal in the proceedings of Uno's Assembly and Council to increase our alarm and despondency in regard to international relations. It is true that the world's statesmen have, not without difficulty, got the machinery of Uno to work and have built the skeleton of a building within which it may continue to work. The Security Council is there, the Economic and Social Committee has been elected, the International Court has been constituted, the birth of the Trusteeship Council is confidently expected, trouble over atomic energy and bombs has been discreetly bypassed. So far, so good; the machinery for international co-operation is there; the multilateral marriage service of the United Nations has been performed, and they are, no doubt, now united in the United Nations Organisation.

But they have been married, it must be remembered, before; twenty-seven years ago they were united in the League of Nations. The same machinery of co-operation was set to work, the same skeleton house of peace built, the same epithalamiums sung. The disastrous result taught a lesson which the world seems determined not to learn: that machinery for international co-operation is useless, is indeed a menace, unless there is a will among the governments of the world, and pre-eminently among the governments of Great Powers, to co-operate. As it turned out, the peace of the world might have been safer if the League had never been born, for in the days of Baldwin and Chamberlain it became an instrument which enabled governments to camouflage their unwillingness to assume the obligations without which international peace and prosperity were unattainable.

The disturbing feature in the proceedings of the last month in the Central Hall and Church House is that they revealed hardly a trace of a vestige of embryonic unity or will to co-operate, least of all among the Great Powers. On the contrary, in the Assembly, in its committees, and on the Security Council, whether the subject was one merely of procedure or the position of the International Trade Union Movement, or the presence of British troops in Indonesia, the main lesson of the proceedings was embittered disunity. We have been told over and over again during the last two years that the only hope of peace will be found, not in international machinery, but in the unity of the three Great Powers—Britain, the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. If that be true, the first session of Uno leaves us with very little hope either of Uno or of peace.

The answer of the optimist is that, if there is disunity, it is better that Mr. Vyshinsky and Mr. Bevin should have it out in public, and then we all know exactly where we are. There may be sufficient shreds of truth in this for an inadequate garment to cover some of the nakedness of poor Uno. But it is poor consolation. The supreme need of the world to-day is international co-operation to prevent war and to prevent universal economic disaster. To do either of these things requires the construction and use of international machinery such as was constructed in Geneva in 1919 and in London in 1946. But if peace is to be consolidated and economic disaster avoided, the machinery must be used for co-operation. That is precisely what Uno's machinery has not been used for during the last weeks. The ominous feature in the proceedings of the Security Council is that Uno has been used consistently as an instrument of national policy and power politics.

Even the League's purpose was never so completely perverted. And it was not merely that the machinery of Uno was used persistently in the Council as an instrument of active international hostility by the Great Powers; the complete lack of co-operation was shown negatively and passively in its other organs. While the meetings were taking place, news about the world's economic position became blacker and blacker. From all sides we heard of failure of crops and the approach of famine. Nothing but immediate international action, international co-operation and planning of the closest and most drastic nature can possibly prevent this international disaster. And here in London the machinery for such action had just been created; the heads of governments who alone could take the necessary decisions by a miracle were all collected on the spot. The League, we had often been told, had failed largely because it occupied itself exclusively with politics and ignored economics. Uno, one might have hoped, would have learnt the lesson from past failure and impending disaster. On the contrary, while Mr. Vyshinsky fought his political battle to the last word over Indonesia and Greece and Syria, instead of sitting down with Mr. Bevin and Mr. Stettinius and deciding upon how to save the world from starving, the Economic Committee did nothing and the Assembly passed a pious and ineffective resolution.

History has never forgiven Nero for fiddling while Rome was burning; perhaps she will always remember the first meeting of Uno for the spectacle of the representatives of a Socialist Republic and a Socialist Monarchy ranting the ancient rubbish about prestige and honour while the workers of the world were starving.

## Mission to India

The Government's decision to send three Cabinet Ministers to India, with plenary powers to negotiate, within the limits of Cabinet policy, a constitutional settlement, reflects the evident anxiety of Mr. Attlee and his colleagues to seize what may be the last chance of securing a solution by agreement. The Mission will arrive towards the end of March. It will find in India an atmosphere of intense suspicion about the sincerity of British intentions: bitterness towards the Raj is increased by the threat of now practically unavoidable famine. The outlook for the negotiations is in many ways unpropitious; but, at any rate, the Provincial elections, as well as that for the Central Assembly, will have been completed; the Mission will be able to meet and talk with the duly elected representatives of the Indian people. Dr. Azad and Mr. Nehru have stated succinctly the minimum demands of Congress—an unequivocal declaration by the British Government of Indian independence, the convening of a Constituent Assembly, and the formation of a provisional National Government. There will, we presume, be little difficulty in meeting the first two demands, provided that the time-table for the attainment by India of *de facto* independence is not too rigid. It is in relation to the third demand that obstacles are most likely to arise. In the House of Commons on Tuesday, Mr. Attlee spoke of "the bringing into being of an Executive Council having the support of the main Indian parties." Will Congress regard such a Council as a satisfactory substitute for a provisional Government? Moreover, though Mr. Nehru talks of "95 per cent. Pakistan," a basis has yet to be discovered on which the Muslim League will consent, even provisionally, to participate in an administration at the Centre.

## Elections in Belgium

The Belgian elections have strengthened the Catholic Party, brought the Communist members of the Chamber from nine to twenty-three, and greatly reduced the strength of the Liberals. A Government is difficult to form. If the Liberals will accept a moderate Socialist platform, the best solution would seem to be a continuation of the van Acker Coalition of Socialists, Communists and Liberals. The Liberals, however, are bitter after their defeat; and, even if they are prepared to co-operate, such a Government of the Left would be continually held up by the Senate which, when the elections are completed, is likely to have a Catholic majority. The alternatives, however, seem even worse. If the Socialists were to join with the Catholics, either alone or in conjunction with the Liberals, the Communists would have all the advantage of opposition: they would be able to point a finger of scorn at Social Democrats, who could be represented (with some truth) as betraying Socialism by forming a coalition with the Catholic Right. The Socialists are very conscious of the dangers of compromising with the Catholics, and it is doubtful if they would do so even if Mr. de Schijver can persuade the Catholic Party to abandon its support of King Leopold. It is doubtful how long any Government can last in the present uneasy balance of parties. The Socialists find themselves in the position that has now become common in Europe: they hold an increasingly restricted and precarious territory between the solid ranks of Catholicism and the growing ranks of Communism.

## Poles Apart

Mr. Bevin's reply to the Yugoslav Memorandum, presented by Mr. Vyshinsky to the Security Council, on the alleged activities of Polish troops in Italy, was effective. The Yugoslav charges that General Anders' army was being moved north-eastwards, that it would shortly relieve American troops in the Julian Marches, and that it constituted a threat to the security of Yugoslavia, were rebutted by Mr. Bevin. In his reply he stated that, except for a comparatively small number of men engaged in guard duties, the bulk of the Polish troops are south of the Po; it is not proposed to move them closer to the Yugoslav frontier, and the recruitment of anti-Tito Yugoslav subjects by General Anders has been stopped for several months on British orders. But this exchange of open letters—a curious new development of "public" diplomacy—by no means disposes of the problem of the Anders Poles. Their continued existence in Italy as an armed emigré force may not immediately threaten Yugoslavia, but it is reasonably regarded throughout Eastern Europe as the focus for the forces which look forward to restoring White rule by military intervention.

## Party Moves in Italy

From two directions moves have been made to woo the large floating vote in Italy which has not yet attached itself firmly to any of the main parties. Having resigned from the Action Party, whose first post-liberation congress a fortnight ago revealed an irreconcilable split between its Liberal and Socialist elements, Signor Parri is now endeavouring to form a new Democratic Party capable of making a nation-wide appeal to the ex-Servicemen and peasants whom the Communist and Socialist Parties have failed to attract, but who are not in sympathy with the programme of the Catholic Centre. Signor Bonomi is credited with a similar intention, though his appeal (probably less effective) could only be to the older generation. Meanwhile, the parties of the Right are far from inactive. The Monarchist Group under Signor Selvaggi has now allied itself to Signor Giannini's "Front of the Common Man," which has just been holding its own national congress in Rome. This alliance is in some ways surprising; for the *Uomo Qualunque* movement has so far displayed Fascist rather than Monarchist traits; but Signor Giannini is an opportunist, ready to accept adherents from any quarter.

## Lull in America

The American steel strike has ended; and the first round in the post-war economic struggle has left both combatants even. The steel workers get the wage-advance recommended by President Truman—which is a good deal less than they demanded—and the employers get the right to a hefty increase in prices, which looks like breaking down the Administration's machinery for keeping prices under control. Mr. John L. Lewis, now back in the A.F. of L., openly rejoices at this and demands a return to completely unfettered collective bargaining without any State interference with either wages or prices; and it looks as if before long he would be getting most of his way. If he does, there is little doubt that America will be heading for an inflationary boom, to be followed in due course by a prodigious crash—unless indeed the Americans are prepared to lend their surplus production all over the world to anyone who will take it, practically irrespective of the prospects of any return. It would, however, be premature to say that the die is already cast in favour of letting the inflationary forces develop unchecked. The Administration will doubtless attempt to withdraw to a new price line; and the struggle will be renewed when the workers find that the wage-advances now conceded have been swallowed up.

## Productivity and Man-power

The Government's conferences with the Trade Unions and the employers on the question of man-power and production are likely to do substantial good only if the Government is able to give them a clear and satisfactory account of the prospective man-power position. By the middle of this year there will still be at least two million persons in the armed forces, and it is now being said—we know not on how good authority—that reduction below this level will have to be slow, and that the ultimate target is at least a million men under arms. If these are really the Government's notions, we entreat them to think again. Industry cannot be expected to work with reasonable efficiency if it is left short of nearly two million workers, mostly in the prime of life—or, let us say, of a million and a half who would have been available for work under the conditions of 1939. With labour shortage at such a point, firms cannot get the skilled labour force they require. It is all very well to talk about our "commitments" as setting a limit to the reduction of our armed forces. The plain fact is that we cannot hope to honour our commitments unless we can get our industries up to a really efficient performance. That is the prime need; and our military "commitments" will have perforce to be accommodated to it.

## The Agricultural Wage Impasse

The farm workers have received their second "No" from the Agricultural Wages Board, but are no more disposed than before to take it for an answer. The Government, which has no power to upset the Board's decision, is in something of a dilemma; for it is now being asked to release the agricultural worker from direction at a moment when the maintenance of the labour force is more plainly necessary than ever. One line that is being considered is some method of providing higher pay for skilled and experienced farm workers. The Unions, however, are insistent that nothing except a rise in the standard wage will meet the immediate need; and they are demanding that, if it can be shown that farmers cannot afford this at present prices the Government shall allow a rise in the prices of foodstuffs sold off the farm, either passing this on to the consumer or meeting it by an increase in the subsidies paid by the Exchequer. These are both unpleasant things to face; for a rise in the cost of living would at once provoke a whole series of wage-demands.

## Uno and Science

The appointment of Dr. Julian Huxley as the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission of U.N.E.S.C.O. is a matter of all-round congratulation. It is, apart from Dr. Huxley's general qualifications, a recognition that science, which was left out in the original conception (or, at least, was regarded merely as the content of "Education" and of "Culture") is accepted for what it is to-day—the dynamic of our social thinking and the material factor, for good or ill, in our civilisation. Dr. Huxley should succeed in creating a really effective organisation. He has been actively promoting the ideas behind it for years, both in terms of the humanities and of science, and he embodies in his own appointment the good will necessary to the task. He was the nominee of the Ministry of Education. He represents what Archibald McLeish and the Americans wanted when they insisted on putting the "S" into U.N.E.C.O. and his appointment had the enthusiastic support of the French, the custodians of "Culture." His reputation and personal relationships with the Russians may be a considerable factor in bringing them in.

## Spy Racket

In the international anarchy of our day every Government employs spies, and all military attachés have the job of obtaining "information"—which is not easily distinguishable from espionage. If challenged, all governments disown their spies; if they fail to try to obtain secrets that give their potential enemies an advantage in preparing for war, they can be held guilty, in our crazy world, of neglecting the security of their country. It follows then that all the headline news and diplomatic notes on the spy story in N. America are suspect. The stories are pure Phillips Oppenheim; the Soviet denials are mere formalities. The incident is the inevitable result of the Allies' refusal to share atomic secrets; the publicity given it is merely a proof of bad international relations.

## PARLIAMENT: Prelude to Bevin

*Wednesday*

THE sittings until Wednesday were like the "shorts" before the Big Picture—Ernest Bevin in "Foreign Affairs." Not even the debate on agriculture could attract more than a thin House; and the National Insurance (Industrial Injuries) Bill was heard in Committee by not more than two-thirds of the members.

The agricultural debate was chiefly interesting because of the measure of agreement between the Government and the Opposition. R. S. Hudson, back in the House after his serious illness, made the case that the industrial population should not live at the primary producer's expense. Tom Williams, Minister of Agriculture, a spirited spokesman for the Government, stated his intention of putting more land to the plough (which pleased most Tory farmers), juggled with the question of how to plough-up more and yet give Ben Smith the promised increase in milk, and expressed a restrained optimism about the future of the land, though he wouldn't be prophetic about the 1947 harvest.

For the first time, Labour had a wide selection of speakers from rural constituencies. Of these, Stubbs of Cambridgeshire, a countryman who has worked on the land for 27 years, made a blunt and effective maiden speech. He said: "... it has all been a mistake to talk of 'farm labourers.' There is no such thing as a farm labourer. They are all skilled men. ..." He urged that the farm worker is the primary producer whose interests have always been ignored. He was also one of the very few who referred to Hot Springs. "I believe," he said, "that food production is not a question to be settled by landlords or by farmers or farm workers only; it must be a national and international problem."

The agricultural debate seemed a long cry from the Hot Springs Conference. Where now are its findings which recommended that world production should be planned according to capacity and allocated according to requirements? Where is the plan for the New World to unfold its cereal-producing resources while the smaller countries of the Old World, more suited to dairy-farming and high-grade produce, import grain? Tom Fraser, Joint Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, gave, by implication, the answer: "All of us appreciate the need for guaranteed prices and assured markets." The Government is meeting the food crisis by encouraging the production of wheat at home. It is a proper decision in order to meet the emergency, but it would be a pity if the immediate scramble for food were to hide the advantages of a world-plan for its orderly production and distribution in future.

The amendments to the National Insurance Bill gave two field-days to the lawyers. Major Boyd-Carpenter, who is the Tories' Sidney Silverman, moved that the compensation for injured workers under the Bill should not be higher than pensions for servicemen under the Royal Warrant. The amendment was rejected, a useful point being made by Austin that the Opposition was trying to create dissension between the Services and industrial workers.

In general, there are more opportunities for private Members to speak in Committee than in full debate. But, apart from the legal experts, Members feel that they would be happier to have rather more opportunity of speaking on the Second Reading of Bills or in major debates, like that on Foreign Affairs, rather than in the confined space of an amendment to a clause in Committee. The enthusiasm of the Front Bench for making speeches of not inconsiderable length is well known and understood by back benchers. None the less, there is at least one case of a Labour M.P. who has prepared seven full-length speeches and risen in his place, in order to catch the Speaker's eye, twenty-eight times—without being called. There are many other Members, on both sides of the House, who would feel happier if the Front Bench remembered that

*Il est des silences plus éloquents que les discours les les plus longs.*

A Full House on Wednesday saw Ernest Bevin, supported by Professor Savory, in a preliminary "trailer" with Zilliacus on the question of Anders' Army in Italy. But Zilliacus had asked whether it was not a source of danger and mischief. That question was inadequately answered.

Over the whole of the first day's debate, in which MacMillan gave a fair and temperate analysis of Russia's alternative policies, lay the shadow of our dilapidated relations with Russia. Well-informed Members, like Phillips Price, who has just returned from Russia, felt that Noel Baker's bland optimism, that a better understanding will emerge from the knockabout stuff at Uno, showed simple faith.

PHINEAS MINOR

## MR. LIPPMANN AT THE RING-SIDE

AMONG innumerable comments on the heavy-weight boxing match between Bevin and Vyshinsky none has been more significant than that of Mr. Walter Lippmann in the *Herald-Tribune*. Mr. Lippmann does not in any sense speak for America or even for the State Department with which he has often been in disagreement. But he is the most instructed of American columnists; he understands Europe and the United States, and on the grounds of *Realpolitik* he has long maintained the twin thesis that America and the Soviet Union need never quarrel, and that American security is bound up with that of Britain and the Dominions. His comment shows an important development in American political consciousness.

His argument may be briefly summarised. In scoring points against each other in public, neither Bevin nor Vyshinsky is seeking a settlement that is likely to give them the security both Britain and the U.S.S.R. desire. Russian policy is apparently only to manœuvre until she has pushed her way through the British barriers in the Balkans, Turkey and Iran. In this the U.S.S.R. may succeed, but, if she does, she will find herself trespassing against America's notion of her own security. For America is "a Continental Island" which cannot be "unconcerned in any of the oceans or their connecting seas." America claims no monopoly and has no wish to keep the Soviet "landlocked," but, if Russia proceeds, without prior agreement or arrangement, to become a great sea and air Power (as she is already "the greatest land Power") then she will find that America is not ready to reconcile herself to "rivalry, competition and uncertainty on the high seas."

This is Mr. Lippmann's lesson for Russia. Towards Britain he is equally frank. To meet the Soviet threat, Bevin's only policy seems to be to combine, for Britain's support, the States of the Middle East, Western Europe, and the U.S.A. This, Lippmann thinks, is a policy based on dangerous assumptions. Great changes are happening in any case in the distribution of world power, especially in Asia; and, though Anglo-American partnership is "one of the great realities of the post-war world," it is not "unlimited." The United States feels herself part of the same economic and moral order as Britain, and if only for strategic reasons, she will never again hesitate to defend the British Isles, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. But America does not stand pat for the British Empire "from Malta to Hong-kong," and Bevin must not mislead the Greeks, Turks and Iranians into thinking that American partnership with Britain is unlimited. America has been successful in making peace in the Far East because she has had an independent policy; in the Middle East she must also do as Britain herself would have done in a similar situation in the past, and act as an independent "mediator." America must break the deadlock.

Already we can hear an indignant chorus as the implications of Lippmann's carefully chosen words are understood. Indeed, we have heard it suggested that Lippmann proposes to play the role of Runciman at Munich, with Britain in Czechoslovakia's shoes. The analogy is faulty in many respects, since Soviet aims are different from Germany's, and Greece, Turkey and Persia are not parts of Britain. Moreover, there is every reason to be sure that Stalin, with his devastated country and vast losses of man-power, wants oil and security, not war, whereas Hitler (as is clear from the Nuremberg documents) wanted not only expansion but also war. Yet it remains true that the suggestion of great changes in Britain's world position, with America playing the part of "mediator," sounds menacing.

If Lippmann's analysis of America's position is correct, there is no cause to criticise his frankness. We criticise his conclusion, which simply accepts the whole power-politics bag of tricks, leaving out all possibilities of a better solution or of any new method of dealing with strategic problems which are essentially different in the atomic age. He is right in saying that Britain is no longer in a position to dictate in the Far East or, without American support, to maintain her hegemony in the Middle East. It is also true that while America herself is building a vast empire and realising that she is a world Power, American opinion—both Right and Left—has become vehemently critical of British imperialism at a time when it is in retreat. It is certainly good, however, for Britain to be warned that America will run no risks in order to enable Britain to maintain her hold in China, India, South Asia and Greece. For that very reason Russia, now afraid only of America, hastens to co-operate in peacemaking in China and the Pacific, and attacks Britain, now financially and militarily dependent on America, in places where American interests are least involved and British imperialism is most unpopular with the American public. Vyshinsky indeed would scarcely have adopted such crude and uncompromising tactics if he had not known that Mr. Stettinius did not stand wholly behind Britain at Uno. It was the formula produced by Mr. Stettinius that prevented a vote against Russia on the Persian dispute. If this was the beginning of mediation, it did not reduce Anglo-Soviet antagonism.

Cannot "mediation" take a more constructive form? Not only Lippmann but all the world can see how absurd it is for Mr. Bevin, soon after his speech about a world commonwealth, to refuse an international commission on the ground of British "honour." It is equally silly and shocking for the representative of world Communism to refuse an international inquiry by pleading the "dignity" of Russia. American "mediation," as the term is usually understood, will not solve this problem.

For years this journal has urged that the only solution for the Dardanelles and of many other places where the interests of world Powers clash, is to make them world bases, policed jointly by the interested Powers. Uno goes some way towards recognising this principle of co-operative defence, and the Powers on the Security Council are pledged to create an International Force. America could propose a general settlement of the Middle East, the demilitarisation of the Dodecanese, Crete and Cyprus, and joint control under Uno of both Dardanelles and Suez Canal. Further, what about the much talked of Reconstruction Commission for the Middle East under the Economic and Social Council?

Surely in this idea lies the right answer to the Anglo-Russian clash in the Middle East. Otherwise, whatever immediate decisions are reached or not reached in the disputes between the Great Powers, their rivalry will grow and the world will drift towards war. In their present tempers neither Britain nor Russia is likely to suggest any such international solution. But the entire world situation might be transformed if American "mediation" took the constructive form of proposing that the Powers on the Security Council should jointly control disputed areas and jointly work for the welfare of their inhabitants.

# THE COST OF HOUSES

It is a thought to cause some disquietude that under Mr. Bevan's new housing plan the standard subsidy will be equivalent to no less than £594 a house, and in agricultural areas to as much as £770. Houses we must have, and many of them; but subsidies at this rate would be unbearable if they were to apply to any large proportion of the new dwellings which the nation is pledged to provide. It seemed a lot when, before the war, the capital value of the standard subsidy worked out at £187 10s., or, in the country districts, to £272; and there were many who enquired how soon it would become possible to build without subsidy decent houses that could be let at rents which ordinary working people could afford to pay. But now, as the aftermath of another war, we find ourselves forced to subsidise house-building to an amount that exceeds the whole pre-war cost. With millions of new houses needed, what are we heading for? Even if the Exchequer can afford its share of these payments, can the local ratepayers afford theirs—with the rating system already in a parlous state?

Yet Mr. Bevan is planning to do the right thing. Housing must not be held up, and, with costs at their present level, no smaller subsidies would avail to get houses built for letting at tolerable rents. The thing, however, cannot go on as it is. For a year or so, we must put up with it as best we can; but during that year a real effort must be made to get the costs down to a reasonable level, and further subsidies must be based on the costs as reduced, and regularly revised to take account of further reductions.

Why are present building costs so monstrously high? Certainly not because builders' wage-rates have risen; for the rise in these has been moderate. It is only one-third above pre-war level in the case of skilled workers, and rather more in that of builders' labourers. The prices of materials have risen a good deal more—of some, very much more; but these increases too, are not nearly enough to account for the advance in total house-building costs. The extravagantly high prices now charged are due mainly to inefficiency, and to the absence of any force making for a high level of output from any section of the industry. These conditions are the result partly of physical shortage, applying to both labour and materials; and they are aggravated—what is the use of denying it?—by a slackness which pervades the entire industry, and cannot be attributed to war-weariness alone.

The shortage of materials is one great factor making for inefficiency. There are few things as demoralising as long spells of enforced idleness while waiting for supplies of bricks, or timber, or paint to turn up. The wages run on while the waiting is done; it would be unfair if they did not, for the failure of the materials to appear to time is obviously not the men's fault. But men who have got used to playing about because there were no materials to work on are very liable to go on playing after the materials have arrived. Building has usually been a casual sort of job, and it is easy to slip into bad habits. It is easy for the employer as well as for his men; for, as long as there is plenty of work waiting and he can charge his own price without fear of being undercut, why should he chivvy his men? If he does, they will probably walk out on him, and he will be lucky if he gets any others to take their places—or, if he does get others, they are more likely than not to turn out worse.

Under these conditions, nearly everybody, master or man, tends to saunter or loiter; and in consequence, the cost of building rises to an immense height without anyone being the better for it. The men do not earn any more; and the consumers and taxpayers have to shoulder a burden which is to no one's advantage. It is not really more pleasant, or even less tiring, to slack on a job than to do it at a reasonable pace—short, of course, of irksome speeding up—and anyone who has watched, or listened to, builders frittering their days away will bear witness that most of them are bored with the waste of time, and would be happier if they were made to give a better day's work. They grumble; but they do little about it, partly because they cannot and partly because, whenever a rot of this sort has set in, it needs some definite action or inspiration to effect a cure.

We are not suggesting that this prevailing slackness is the only cause of the present inflation of housing costs. But it is one of the big problems which Mr. Bevan has to face. Pretty much the same thing happened, under largely similar circumstances, after the last war; and it was then cured, as far as it was cured, only by a remedy worse, for the time, than the disease—by deliberately stopping building even though the houses were urgently needed. This is a remedy to which Mr. Bevan obviously cannot afford to resort. So what can he do to cure this and the other maladies that prevent the building industry from setting to work manfully to meet the public's need?

The first essential of all is to promote a steady flow of all needed materials to every job. It is even more important, at this stage, to get the brickyards working smoothly, to remedy such awkward shortages as that of timber, and to expand the output of the factories which produce builders' requisites of every sort than to take action directly to increase output on the site. This latter problem can be tackled successfully only when the other has been grappled with—by making adequate supplies of what is wanted available wherever possible, and by making it quite clear what substitutes are to be used where this cannot yet be done. This of course involves the largest possible development of factory standardisation, not only in producing prefabricated dwellings, but even more in simplifying the production of components and materials to the utmost practicable extent. This is, no doubt, in part a long-run problem; and it is better to have unstandardised components now than none at all. But what the Ministry of Works has to help Mr. Bevan to do is to put into effect a programme which will combine the highest possible supplies now with a speedy change-over to more efficient methods of mass-production of standardised components and fittings.

As for prefabrication, the essential thing is to arrange for production of standard types on a scale sufficient to allow firms to put in the plant that will do the jobs at the lowest technically practicable cost—in other words, not to rely on scattering round small orders among a large number of firms (for no small order can make it worth while to do the thing properly unless there is a firm assurance of repeat orders on the same or a larger scale). There is some reason for believing that the Ministry of Works is by now master of this lesson—which, if it had been learnt sooner, would have made it possible to get many thousands more houses than there is any chance left of getting this year. There are ways of guaranteeing continued orders to firms which have produced generally satisfactory models without letting such firms profiteer by keeping up their contract prices when their costs fall, and yet without depriving them of the incentive to reduce their costs. One way is to take over the entire output of a factory on terms which allow a sliding scale of profit rising as the costs fall. Control of material prices must of course be kept; but it could be coupled with an incentive to reduce costs.

If material supplies, including supplies of prefabricated components, can be got right, the way will be clear for tackling the problem of efficiency on the site. This is, above all else, a human problem; and probably the best way of beginning upon it is to make a fresh start. The Government proposes, it is known, to set up its own building squads to supplement the resources of the private builders. What it must do is to get for these squads of its own the very highest qualities of managerial and supervising workers that can be found anywhere in the industry, together with a nucleus of really good and steady craftsmen. It would be well worth while not only to pay high salaries to the former of these groups, but also to offer the working craftsman, carefully selected as a nucleus, a new kind of contract, in form of a salary rather than a wage, like that which is paid to certain established employees of the Port of London Authority who form the nucleus of its effective working force. If the Government can get its squads working as a demonstration model to the rest of the industry, the effects will soon be seen elsewhere. Let the Government but succeed in building houses more cheaply and better than they are being built by private firms working to public orders, and there will be a speedy tightening up all along the line. The very opposite will happen if the Government lets itself be put off with managers and foremen and workers of poor quality—that is, with those whom the private firms will be in general well pleased to spare.

Along these lines Mr. Bevan and his colleagues will have to tackle the housing problem, if there is not to be before long a collapse which will threaten the whole Government with disaster. Subsidies at the proposed rate would be simply intolerable if they were to continue long; for they would eat up so high a proportion of our national and local resources as to make it quite impossible to tackle other tasks hardly less urgent than housing—for example, the building of schools and community centres and the effective formation of town-planning schemes.

## GENTLEMAN'S DISAGREEMENT

Open disagreements openly achieved
Are now the international ideal,
And Powers' pent-up feelings are openly relieved
Before the global court of high appeal.
Open accusations openly discussed
Replace insidious methods of intrigue
And the public ventilation of ubiquitous mistrust
Is a manifest advance upon the League.

How much more satisfying is the free Homeric swipe
Than wars of nerves and whispering campaigns,
How good to sweep out stables of the more Augean type,
How good to clear the diplomatic drains.
How helpful that all grievances should candidly be aired
When they feel the atmosphere is overcharged,
Though mutual good relations are effectively impaired
And the scope of *mésentendus* is enlarged.

When the fog of dark suspicion is succeeded by a gale,
When statesmen scorn the arts of subterfuge,
When guardians of security are fighting tooth and nail
For the sovereign independence of the stooge,
When secret pacts are cited which the public never knew
When fighting friends stand up to cast the stone,
How wormy are the skeletons exposed to public view,
How fierce the light that beats upon the zone.

Open allegations of endangering the peace
The Persians with the Soviet unite,
And forge our bonds of amity with Syria and Greece
While neither Power abates her sovereign right.
Defamatory frankness is the order of the day,
Old fighting friends are openly estranged,
But while open disagreements have a useful part to play,
Let's hope clandestine pacts may be arranged.

SAGITTARIUS

# A BELGIAN DIARY

I HAVE done myself the pleasure of spending a few days in a European oasis. Oasis? Rather I should borrow the metaphor of a friend in Brussels who compares Belgium with a tranquil eddy in the midst of the torrential flood of European misery. It is mainly, I think, because of Belgium's present prosperity that last Sunday's elections were conducted in an atmosphere of the utmost calm. Why worry, when things are going well? An election based on a strict system of P.R. could not in any case produce a spectacular change like that of the British elections last July. In fact, as I discovered from conversations with Party leaders before the elections, a political deadlock was almost inevitable.

* * *

The question of the King is the one emotional issue in Belgium, but it was not an electoral issue at all. The explanation of this paradox is that all the political leaders know that Leopold III cannot return, since his arrival would mean the danger of a general strike, the increase of the separatist movement in Wallonia and an end in any case to a national unity to which they are all pledged. As one of these leaders said to me, the point of having a king is to unite a country. If there are 40 per cent. against the king, he cannot return. It may be that a plebiscite, to which the Socialists are uncompromisingly opposed, would produce a small majority for Leopold, because Catholic Flanders is still strongly favourable to him. The new Catholic Party (P.S.C.) which resembles the M.R.P. in France, talks of a novel constitutional device—a popular "consultation" which would not have the binding force of a plebiscite. But I think this is only talk, and that the King's chances have not been increased by the propaganda on his behalf done by M. Pirenne, his secretary, who endeavours to answer the charges against Leopold by the publication of extracts from documents which, by agreement, were only to be published later and in full. Everyone on the Left believes that Leopold hates Parliamentary institutions and that his return would be the signal for the restoration of reaction in all its forms. So clear is it that any attempt to restore him would divide the country from top to bottom that I doubt whether the Catholic party really want to invite him back. As I write, a student demonstration is parading the streets shouting anti-Leopold slogans. The present Regent, his brother, on the other hand, is popular and may continue with general agreement, or, if Leopold abdicates, no one will object to his son reigning in his place. It is significant that M. Pierlot, elder statesman of the Right, published a criticism of the King immediately after the poll.

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Though some bitter things have been said during the election, I found that Communist leaders were anxious to allow nothing to happen which would make impossible their continued coalition with the Socialists, whom they have only attacked on two main points. They complain, of course, that the Socialists have refused "unity," and shortly before the elections they began to demand wage increases. Until then they had agreed with Mr. van Acker's policy of stable wages and prices. During the election they have been saying that prosperity is sufficient and profits high enough to allow, say, a five per cent. increase in wages. They argue that the workers must have some increase if strikes are to be avoided, and that Belgium cannot afford strikes. To this the reply is that wage increases would have to include the salaries of State employees, which do not come out of profits and that if wages were raised in some industries, the demand would at once become general, with the inflationary results that the Communists, in company with the other Parties, wish to avoid.

The Catholics are showing a threatening circular sent to suspected collaborationists by the *Front de l'Independence*. It is a printed letter telling the collaborationist that it would be better for him not to vote. Since voting is compulsory, failure to vote means a reprimand and perhaps a small fine from a Justice of the Peace; but, since it is a serious offence for anyone who has belonged to a collaborationist organisation to vote, the recipient of the letter is threatened with denunciation and six months or more imprisonment if he votes. I should guess that such letters are likely to be disregarded, since the man who obeyed and did not vote would accuse himself and have to explain to the J.P. that he did not vote because he was a collaborationist!

* * *

The van Acker Government can claim some credit for the prosperity. First, the currency reform was successfully carried out. Secondly, the Prime Minister persuaded the Trade Unions that it was better to produce more and keep prices stable than to run the risk of an inflationary spiral by demanding wage increases. Thirdly, since Belgian miners showed the same reluctance to work as British miners, special rations, amounting in some cases to 4,000 calories a day, were provided for the mines. German miners were imported to take the place of the foreign workers who left after Liberation. Moreover, Belgians are hard-working, and their country has only been devastated in comparatively small patches. The other side of the picture is that Belgian profits by a vast involuntary tourist traffic. American and British soldiers spend large sums in Belgium and the Allies have paid for their use of Belgian ports and facilities. The United States made a generous settlement of Lend-Lease and Belgium has borrowed money from her Allies. Moreover published industrial accounts are deceptive because they allow too little for seven years' depreciation of all machinery. Pessimists argue, therefore, that when these temporary advantages are exhausted, Belgium will find that she has been living in a fool's paradise. The pump has been primed, but will the water flow when the priming has finished? No one can yet say whether, with no prospect for trade with derelict Germany, formerly a most important customer, and so little sign of the United States accepting European imports, Belgium will be in a position in twelve months' time to export what she must export if she is to buy the raw materials and food she needs from abroad. But for the moment—and perhaps for a long time—Belgium is prosperous.

* * *

I found Antwerp much less damaged than I had been led to suppose. There are bad patches in the town and over the roads towards the docks, but the vast harbour itself is in working order; although not full, as in old days, it is daily growing more busy. I was lucky enough to spend an hour or two on a sunny day in a small motor boat going round the docks, ending up with one of the famous key locks into the Scheldt which the Germans tried but failed to blow up. They destroyed some of the great cranes and landing places, and the R.A.F., with spectacular accuracy, gutted the huge assembly yards of General Motors and Fords. But there were freighters from America and Norway and Denmark and France and Britain and a score of other countries, and the long lines of barges showed that at least a fraction of the old traffic is slowly making its way back on to the inland waterways of Europe. A small fraction as yet, I should say. The floating grain elevators lay at anchor in dozens: I only saw one of them actually at work transferring grain from a sea-going vessel to an inland barge. The official who took us was happy to see some work again after the stagnation of war. He declared that he had no concern with politics—only with having enough to eat. And the dock workers outside whom I questioned gave much the same answer.

One sign of improvement is that black market prices are falling. You can still buy most things you want in Brussels at a fancy price on the pavement if you go down the right street at the right time, and are careful not to be accompanied by any official who may be noticed by one of the spies in the shop windows. And of course nothing can be done about the kind of black market which consists of peasants selling their butter and eggs to private customers. But in the shops I found that a dual system had become the accepted thing. You could buy chocolate or what you liked at the legal price with so many coupons; if you had no coupons, the price was a few francs higher, but you bought it all the same. Part of the black market, of course, is a hang-over from the Resistance, when to organise illegally against the Germans was patriotic. I believe history will show that the Belgian Resistance, so much less spectacular than in some other countries, was among the most effective. Belgium was run by a German military government and a Belgian administration. The administration, I am told, was so successful that it even managed to persuade the Germans that the number of Belgian workers at work in Germany was twice as great as it was!

* * *

This people is not always as sober as it appears to-day. I am told that Mr. Churchill's welcome here was almost delirious. The hail of chrysanthemums thrown at his car was positively dangerous, and people struggled to touch the hem of his garment. For them he was the one great Liberator. He was always ready for the occasion with fluent, and highly idiosyncratic bull-dog French. His linguistic errors were cherished as masterpieces. He thanked the people of Brussels warmly for naming an Avenue "*après moi*." He makes, it seems, the usually unimportant error of placing the definite article before the names of towns as one does before that of countries. Thus he speaks of arriving at *la Bruxelles* as well as in *la Belgique*. This led to an odd moment in Anvers (Antwerp) when he told the delighted crowd that he hoped "*retourner à l'Anvers*." If Mr. Churchill would come no one cared whether he arrived "up-side-down or right-side-up."

CRITIC

## THIS ENGLAND

**A 5/- prize for the first entry in this column goes to X. Y. Z.**

**Paste entries on postcard or slip of paper and give details of origin. Address to THIS ENGLAND, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.**

When Miss Margaret J. Bandy, of Dunstable, was practising for the "eyes right" salute which Land Army girls will give Princess Elizabeth on Thursday, she was so enthusiastic that she ricked her neck.—*Birmingham Evening Dispatch.*

F.—B—. was said to have told a policeman:

"The doors were open; we just walked in and helped ourselves. You can't blame me for trying to make an honest shilling."—*Evening Standard.*

Surely it is common sense that Nature intended us to sleep in contact with the earth. Instead, we build artificial dwellings, insulated from the earth, and then we wonder why we get all sorts of nervous ailments. Sleeping two storeys up, I nevertheless manage to keep my body at earth potential by attaching the wireless earth. Sometimes I wrap the bare wire round my waist, and sometimes I wrap it round my big toe.

This simple expedient does away at one sweep with thousands of years of artificial living, and anyone who tries it will notice that his dreams are much more vivid.—Reader's letter to *Picture Post*.

"I am expecting a baby and would like to know if you can settle an argument I had with a friend. I have always plucked my eyebrows, and she says I shouldn't, because it may affect the baby. Is this so?"—Letter in *Woman's Own*.

## WORSE THAN ATOMS?

THREE menaces overshadowed the conference of British and foreign scientists in London last week-end—Famine, the Atomic Bomb and the Canadian spy-scare. The first was dominant, supplanting the atom as the main preoccupation of the meeting; the second was brought into perspective; the third was not on the agenda, but very much in the minds of everyone there.

Under the title of "Science and the Welfare of Mankind," the conference had been called by the Association of Scientific Workers in conjunction with other scientific organisations. Foreign scientists, including Dr. John Simpson, one of the Chicago group which helped to produce the bomb, took part. Professor Joliot-Curie, French High Commissioner for Atomic Energy, sent a warning message (most apposite to the spy-scare) and the Russians, though invited, were conspicuously absent. It was really to have been a "second-thoughts" conference on the atom; but Dr. H. L. Richardson, who was until recently agricultural adviser to the Chinese Government, brought the scientists down to realities more immediate, almost more horrifying than the atomic peril. More horrifying, perhaps, because while human reason may prevail to avoid the atomic war, nothing can be done, with all the ingenuity of science, to avert the starvation and death which face 60,000,000 people in the next six months; three times more deaths in six months than the total killed in six years of total war. As Mr. W. Le Gros Clark, the nutrition expert, said, the purgatory of the scientist is that his methods can now predict with certainty such a sacrifice of human life, yet he cannot intervene in time.

Dr. Richardson had plenty of longer-term answers to famine—by modernising Asiatic agriculture. Largely with the help of fertilisers, combined with pest and disease control, irrigation schemes and so on, the existing soil could yield at least 50 per cent. more food. But he also warned that, unless birth-control could cope with the rising tide of population, which would swell with the introduction of proper health measures, Asia could not support its ultimate population.

On the atom, Professor Blackett gave a masterly and statesmanlike examination of the Uno Charter, the veto, and the Atomic Commission. He was firmly for the veto as the only realistic approach. The Great Powers must face their responsibilities squarely. He was for the terms of the resolution setting up the Atomic Commission, and he insisted on the complete elimination of the bomb from world armaments. It must not be in the armoury of the international police force. Britain must not develop the bomb. If Britain were to arm against the other Great Powers, the result would be extreme poverty in peace and probable destruction in war.

Most of the "atomic" speakers were satisfied that inspection and supervision by the World Security Council were perfectly feasible and that the chances of a "rogue attack"—a country producing bombs secretly and launching them without warning—were, if the country was not one of the Great Powers, extremely remote.

The old ladies' nightmare of the atomic nihilist leaving fission-bombs in railway cloakrooms, was also disposed of. But it was replaced by Joliot-Curie's factual prediction of the ultra-secret war which would result from the world-conspiracy to create and withhold secrets. He said it would force nations, in self-defence against the threat of powers with atomic-capacity, to devise methods more insidious and more treacherous. The Power which felt itself secure in its arsenal of atomic bombs would find strange, unaccountable phenomena occurring—abortions would rise until only one child in six would be born alive, fires would inexplicably destroy stores, droughts would cut down hydro-electric production, new pests would invade the fields and destroy the crops. Then, one day, the nation afflicted by these man-made plagues of Egypt would realise that for years an undeclared war had been in progress, a war which had reduced it as effectively as a siege.

There must be no secrets, insisted Prof. A. V. Hill, Foreign Secretary of The Royal Society. He went so far as to suggest that scientists must refuse to carry on work which violated the ethics of the profession and its duties to humanity. There must be no secrets, they all insisted, which will corrupt science and poison international relations.

While they were so insisting, the Mounties were "getting their men" and rounding up "The Reds."

RITCHIE CALDER

## THE POTTERIES TO-DAY

THE Five Towns have no patron saint, but the Wedgwood statue which faces Stoke station serves as a good substitute. The pottery industry is concentrated in Hanley, Burslem and the other townships which have been fused into the city of Stoke-on-Trent. In a few square miles you can find some three hundred factories which, before the war, produced eighty-five per cent. of British pottery. The industry began in North Staffordshire because there were suitable clay and coal deposits; it has remained there ever since, tied to its pool of skilled labour. In the same way, the workers have been tied to the industry. At least half the working population were actual pottery operatives. Having comparatively few chances of alternative employment, the workers could turn only to the dole in bad times and have always stood upon difficult ground in their efforts to secure better wages and working conditions. Even when the pottery industry had begun to recover from the impact of the Great Depression—which drastically cut its export trade—employment conditions were not too good. In the years immediately before the war, there were seldom fewer than five thousand unemployed pottery operatives out of a total of about sixty thousand in the Stoke area. Many more operatives were on short time.

By modern standards, the industry was technically backward. It had a long tradition of personal ownership and management. There had been little amalgamation: there were many small firms working in strong competition with each other, some of them lacking either the capital or the desire to modernise their plant and establish better and more efficient working conditions. All the same, the industry had an annual turnover approaching twenty million pounds: its exports were worth about a quarter of that total and represented slightly under one per cent. of all British exports. If it is to play its part in the drive to raise the level of British exports, and adequately to meet the demands of the home market, a good deal of re-equipment and reorganisation is essential. For these reasons, it is one of the industries selected for the experiment of a Working Party.

Talking to manufacturers, managers and trade unionists in the Potteries, I found considerable agreement about the difficulties that face the industry—though often they suggested very different ways of meeting them. The National Society of Pottery Workers, for instance, last year produced a comprehensive survey of the industry in which the Society set out its proposals for reconstruction. This report has been the Society's platform in the Working Party.

At the present time, the pottery industry—like any other producing civilian consumption goods—has a sellers' market. One firm, I was told, is booking orders five and six years ahead; others know that their whole output can be absorbed by the home and export markets for at least five years. Operating under the direction of the Board of Trade—of which most manufacturers to whom I talked took a very favourable view—about one-third of their production in bulk is going for export and the rest, all undecorated ware, to the home market. But, in value, the figures are the other way about. Decorated pottery has a high ratio of value to bulk, and all but a fraction of its raw materials are found in Britain. As a quality product it is ideal for export under present conditions. Competition from Continental and Japanese factories has been temporarily eliminated by the war—though American production of medium quality china has been steadily increasing. "Until the Czechs and Japanese begin exporting again," one manager said to me, "we have nothing to worry about. The American factories are more modern and efficient, but people in Canada and the United States will still come here for quality products with famous names."

But the pottery manufacturers are reluctant to increase their productive capacity much above the pre-war level. Most of them seem far more concerned with reducing their costs, at the moment averaging about 65 per cent. above pre-war levels. They believe that when the post-war demand begins to fall off, they must depend on a combination of quality and low prices to hold their own. But not one of them will commit himself to any forecast of the date when decorated pottery will once more be released for the home market.

The industry has had to compensate those firms which closed down during the war. More than half the firms in the industry were "concentrated." A number of firms were selected to carry on by mutual agreement, taking over the market and some of the labour of the eliminated plants, which were compensated by the remaining firms. By the end of 1944 less than a third of the pre-war labour force remained in the industry. A few of the firms that shut down have been opened again: others face serious difficulties in recruiting labour, restoring their plant, securing stocks of raw material—now in very short supply—and getting their production going again.

One of the proposals which has been put forward by the National Society of Pottery Workers is that, before any factory is allowed to start up again, a Board of Trade licence should be required to secure its conformity with minimum standards of health and efficiency. The General Secretary of the National Society said to me: "This could be the opportunity to eliminate the slum factory from the industry. There are too many obsolete and unhealthy factories which can't even claim they are producing high-quality work. There are a lot of things which must be done in the industry to codify wage scales, revise the apprenticeship system and improve working conditions, but the main problem facing the industry is the age and structural condition of most of the factories. A rebuilding programme — if necessary, with financial assistance from the Government—is essential."

A good many manufacturers agree that modernisation of their plant must be given priority, though they will often add that pre-war trade conditions prevented them from seeking to raise the required capital. More than one complained to me that the Income Tax system did not permit them to write off sufficient money for depreciation. This may have been true during and after the slump of the Thirties, but, during the earlier part of this century, the low level of wages certainly militated against capital improvements and reorganisation. Mechanisation cannot be carried past a certain point in an industry so dependent upon craftsmen. But that limit has certainly not been approached. A number of smaller firms would be unable to introduce many of the recent technical developments: if the industry is to become efficient and healthy their elimination in some way is essential. Some manufacturers have already begun to modernise their methods and equipments. Wedgwood's, for example, were lucky enough to have virtually completed a modern factory in the country just south of Stoke at the outbreak of war. Others have seen their plans delayed and though they have now been granted building licences are finding it almost impossible to secure labour and materials to undertake the intended modifications. But some of these firms were already ahead in efficiency and working conditions. Their enterprise does little to solve the problem

of the slum factory. Though considerable advance has been made in eliminating industrial diseases, deaths from lead poisoning still occur and, during the year before the war, fifty workers died and another fifty were permanently disabled by silicosis in the Stoke area.

This has had considerable influence upon the supply of labour for the industry—a question that is always placed next to modernisation in importance and above it in priority. During the war, men and women have been drawn off to work in munitions. The Royal Ordnance Factories at Swinnerton and Radway Green have taken thousands of workers: other arms firms in the neighbourhood have at last opened up the chance of alternative employment and, by giving workers the experience of other trades, have broken down the isolation of the pottery industry which helped to perpetuate the old conditions. Juveniles, in the past, were absorbed by pottery firms which could only offer them blind-alley jobs. Now a comprehensive apprenticeship scheme is in preparation with the full backing of the National Society, which could do much to ensure that juveniles were given the opportunity for proper training, with a craftsman's job at the appropriate rates when the apprenticeship was completed. "But where are we going to get the young workers in spite of this?" I was asked by a worker in one factory. "They'll soon be leaving school at sixteen. If they go into the Army for a couple of years at eighteen, they won't want to do another five years' training after they are demobilised before they can earn a man's wage." I could only tell him that I had been asked the same question in other industries where it takes some years to acquire the necessary skill.

The history of wage-rates in the pottery industry is not too happy. Though some improvement has been achieved during the war—in welfare as well as wages—many anomalies remain. The National Society is now seeking to codify the various trades in the industry and to eliminate some of the complexities of craft classification which have led to men receiving different rates for what is virtually the same job. In the past, the low level of women's wages and the practice of employing apprentices on craftsmen's work have had a depressing effect on the rates paid to men. Many women have been forced to go on working after marriage to supplement the family income, thus helping to keep the men's rates down. The National Society strongly believes that in the pottery industry, the "rate for the job" is not only practicable but essential if the wage structure is to be consolidated on a satisfactory basis. "Don't forget," said a manager to me, "that 85 per cent. of the workers are pieceworkers. It'll take some time before this wages question can be settled satisfactorily." Here, as in other aspects of the industry, the legacy of the nineteenth century is still strong.

The war brought many changes to the industry. Canteens were introduced; the workers were given a guaranteed week; and the war-time system of controls has given the appropriate Government Departments a much closer acquaintance with the conditions and problems of the industry than ever before. These things must remain. Reconstruction isn't just a matter of building more efficient factories. It is the first chance that the pottery industry has had to introduce minimum standards of health, welfare and wages, without which no increased technical efficiency is possible. If that chance is lost at a time when the industry is doing better than at any time in the last twenty years or so, it not only means that it will be unable to stand up to the sort of trade conditions that may turn up in about five or six years, but it also means that the supply of skilled labour will dwindle until the shortage of craftsmen will cripple the industry.

In some ways the industry is unique. It has traditionally a reputation for fine craftsmanship and quality. The Working Party Report may mark out the road it must follow to become healthy and efficient.

NORMAN MACKENZIE

# IS GOD AN ENGLISHMAN?

IN an article in THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION several months ago, J. B. Priestley quoted a "young and extremely intelligent foreign artist," who had told him that, in his opinion and that of his friends, London was destined to become the cultural capital of Europe. Despite the flattering definition, which makes me shirk the consequences, I must now confess that I happened to be that creature—for reasons which will make themselves plain.

Mr. Priestley stated that he did not share my expectations, and gave a number of reasons to prove his point. At the time I thought this a further proof of my theory. If Mr. Priestley had said: "Yes, the foreigner is right, let's start making our preparations," he would have substituted the mentality of a World Fair for that of the Alma Mater and thus been untrue to the British spirit. Now, however, I am beginning to be afraid that, after all, he may have been right; but as the reason for this fear was not numbered among Mr. Priestley's arguments I feel it to be my duty to speak my mind. My duty, not only as a guest of the United Kingdom and an admirer of the British spirit, but as a European.

What is this nebulous thing I call "the British spirit"? It is hard to define, but easy to demonstrate. For instance: when I escaped from occupied Europe and finally arrived in England, Mussolini had just fallen. I was taken from Bristol, where I landed, to London, where I was going to be put in prison, and accompanied by a gaoler; but the prison called itself "reception centre" and the gaoler described himself as "guide." I was quite happy, for I had finally arrived in the only country in the world where a man is gaoled by another man who calls himself his "most obedient servant."

In a railway compartment five gentlemen were sitting with five newspapers, carrying in the largest print the greatest headline of the war: "MUSSOLINI FALLEN." What made me happiest of all was that none of the five gentlemen, during that three-hours' journey, mentioned the subject once, didn't even look at the headline, didn't show the slightest satisfaction. Two of them were discussing a forthcoming cricket-match between the fathers and the sons of a certain boarding-school, two others were staring past each other like paintings on opposite walls, and only the fifth one occupied himself with the paper: he was solving a cross-word puzzle. This was it, this was England, this was the civilisation that had saved our world; for the truest definition of civilisation was self-control, and the British Understatement was its highest expression.

After I was released from prison—where a notice on the wall had said: "Dear friends, you are perfectly free to go wherever you like, but we must warn you that on any attempt to escape you will be shot at without warning"—I emerged in London like a soul in heaven. In the first hotel where I lived I shared a room with an American. It was one of London's oldest hotels and he was one of the New World's newest Americans. We discussed the British—after the American had protested that the door of the communal bathroom was invariably locked at 8 a.m. and had received the butler's answer: "I am afraid, Sir, that I couldn't give you any reason but that we have locked that bathroom at 8 a.m. for the last hundred years." The American was exasperated and couldn't understand why I was so delighted by the butler's answer. He couldn't realise that I had travelled thousands of miles just to hear that; he grumbled because he had not travelled thousands of miles to hear just that.

A few days later his British secretary—the third one in two weeks—handed in her notice. He asked her why, and she confessed, after a lot of pressure, that she did not like the way he worked: with his feet on his desk. He answered, beaming: "Now I've got you, sister! We Americans have been working with our feet on our desks for the last hundred and fifty years!" and was crushed when it didn't stop her from going, as the butler's answer had stopped him from getting up after 7 a.m. He thought it unfair, and couldn't understand why I wanted to meet that secretary and shake her by the hand; he thought she wasn't even worth kissing.

What he didn't understand at all was why I had so many British friends. Now the funny thing is that, two and a half years later, this American still is one of my very best friends, whereas many of the British friends, who at the time seemed meant for life, are slowly fading back into the "do come and have dinner with us" sort. The secret is: the peace.

With the American the friendship started its bloom after the victory had been won, for before that we were far too busy fighting. With the English the friendship withered, because we weren't busy fighting any more. The war had been won, the job done—now the home-life was going to be restored and with the home-life the age-old slogan: "The niggers begin at Calais." After VE day came the terrifying discovery that the British, who had won the war because they were the last bastion of Europe's Spirit, thought they had won it because God was an Englishman.

I know this sounds foreign, almost Irish, and not very mannered. But hang manners; for what is happening? Let me give an example and honestly speak for myself. I have had two plays performed in London, and the press, with very few exceptions, have slaughtered both of them with as much ferocity as English manners permit an Englishman to show. That, in itself, is right and proper. I have been slaughtered before and I'll doubtless be slaughtered again, and nobody can say that I didn't ask for it. If the English, by mouth of one critic, even go as far as to admit: "We wish this gentleman would leave us alone," then the only thing I have to answer is a quotation from Heinrich Heine (another nigger): "If I love you, it is none of your business." For I love the English, I think they are wonderful; and I don't change my opinion because they, in reverse, think I stink. The alarming thing about the whole business is a quite different one.

When discussing another play of mine, about to be put on, I got two pieces of advice from very good friends, belonging to the meant-for-life ones. The first advice was: "Don't bring it under your own name, take a British alias, something like "John Briton." The second was about the cast. The leading part could only be acted, if the balance of the play was to be saved, by a certain actor, who happened to be the only one in London right for the role. This actor now proved to be a foreigner. At which the friends, whose sincerity I have no reason to doubt, got quite heated and said: "Never. Enough of these foreigners; if the play is to be done in England at all it will damn well be done by British actors." "So you would rather wreck the play than have it acted by a foreigner?" I asked, and they answered: "Yes; never mind the play—rather a wrong Englishman—than a right foreigner." I asked others—all honest, open-minded, sincere Englishmen—and all of them answered: "As it is meant for Britain, let it be done by the British."

Now this will not do. I do not write for Britain as a nation, but for Europe, and I will show my plays to London first because London is, by rights, the capital of Europe. The fact that I am by nationality a Dutchman is now, after the war has been won by the European Spirit, as irrelevant as, before the war, the fact that a British artist was by birth a Scotsman, a South African, a New Zealander or even an Englishman.

But it looks as if this London—turned into the last foothold of European civilisation by an act of God—has so little faith in its own indomitable spirit that it fears to be de-naturalised by an influx of Continental minds. As if it does not realise that British morals and manners, the behaviour and rules of British community

and British civilian discipline are so strong, that London now, will send any foreigner home with the hall-mark of her civilisation and herself prosper because of it. For only by giving the violent continental mind the benefit of an impact with the British understatement will Europe live, and Britain with it. The Continental flame-throwers of the spirit, attracted by European civilisation at its summit, should have to wipe their feet and wash their hands and talk about the weather first, before being admitted in the drawing-room to put up their soap-box, shout that they are the New Messiahs, fall off it, be lifted up politely, given a cup of tea and asked to say that again. But they should not be turned away at the customs on the ground that they are foreigners and that God is an Englishman, so that they could not possibly be any of His blood-relations. For by keeping God an Englishman instead of permitting Him to be a European, the British will turn Him into an American.

If that should happen,—if the European spirit should be forced to cross the Atlantic and settle in the United States, where no man is asked where he came from but only what he has got to say—the Continent would be left to sink back into the gloom of provincialism, with the British Isles as a closed window, reflecting the sad glow of Europe's cultural sunset. And then the sword would rise from the eastern horizon, be stretched out in the sky, and the old prophecy would be fulfilled :

"I SHALL DRIVE THEE OUT AMONGST OTHER PEOPLES, AND THOU SHALLST PROSTRATE THYSELF FOR OTHER GODS."

After that misquotation I await, with all my guns loaded, your honoured reaction—greatly relieved.

JAN DE HARTOG

## THE GREEK EXHIBITION

THE Greek Exhibition at Burlington House does not come near to representing Greek art as the French Exhibition did French art, or the Flemish Flemish. Nothing has been lent from abroad, nothing even from the British Museum. But here are sculpture, painting, pottery and textiles, the fruits of human feeling, thought and skill over a period of five thousand years. As a critic, I am floored by the difficulty of giving any notion of so lavish and well selected an anthology, packed as it is with pleasures for the spectator.

It would be wasted ingenuity, I think, to dilate upon supposed resemblances between the Euergides vase-painter and El Greco, or between Mycenean goblets and 14th century sgraffito ware. Even the art of "classical" Greece is wonderfully various. What men meant by Greek art was, until about a hundred years ago, the Hellenistic or Greco-Roman sculpture typified by the Laocoon and the Apollo Belvedere. Then the importance of the Elgin Marbles was belatedly recognised, and the 5th century became the focus of admiration. New knowledge and a change in taste have recently set an equally exclusive fashion for the archaic style of the 6th century. The characteristics of the three periods are markedly different—so much so that Roger Fry dismissed enthusiasm for Greek sculpture as in great part a delusion, a by-product of our high regard for Greek poetry and thought. An alternative explanation may be put forward, which is this : the Greeks were such protean artists that they can offer works to meet the taste of each generation and every temperament. Look at the bronze head of a griffin in this show (124)—it might be Chinese ; and the 5th century bronze stag (177)—Chinese again, or Persian, or modern French ? The basalt head (172) suggests an Houdon ; the Duke of Bedford's Satyr (180) some other contemporary of Fragonard. Is not the Boeotian goddess (109) a recent Picasso made miniature and in three dimensions ? (If a white-ground vase also reminds us of Picasso, it is because such works deeply influenced his drawing.) The Greeks significantly made of Proteus a divinity, giving him as parents—such is the inexplicable profundity of their legends— Oceanus and a sea-nymph. For, in fact, it was the sea-faring life of the Greeks that, by bringing them into touch with a variety of peoples, freed them from the sacred tyranny of custom, made them perceive that change might be improvement, and thus, through the practice of comparison, developed in them not only a taste for novelty but the power of reasoning.

"Works to meet the taste of every temperament," I have said, but Fry, though he praised a few marbles, usually refused to Greek sculpture the highest qualities, such as he found in both Chinese and negro work. The liveliness of his response to visual art was second only to his power of critical analysis ; and finding so much to enjoy in this exhibition I began to ask myself why my admiration for Greek art was so much more wholehearted than his. Was I hypnotised by the love of Greek literature that I caught from my education, despite the anguish of trying to write iambics ? Or by the later love of Greece itself, gained during unforgettable journeys past the blue-shadowed coasts and through the valleys silvery with olive-yards ? It is true that my delighted memory of the sculpture at Olympia, which Roger Fry thought so insipid, remains inseparable from visions of Olympia itself, columns supine against a background of umbrella pines—a Poussin landscape made actual. But I have now found similar if less intense happiness at Burlington House, a building that cannot be said to be one of my favourite haunts.

In front of the Chatsworth Apollo, the Cottenham Relief, Mr. Clifford Smith's Hermes, the Royal Academy torso, Lord Melchett's head of Aphrodite, Mr. Matthiesen's fragment of a head, and many other exhibits, including the Sicilian coins, I was moved as I had in the past been moved by the more complete and important works in the Athens museums. The imaginative world projected by these sculptors is to me infinitely congenial. I follow Roger Fry in believing that the formal virtues—call them "plastic values" or "significant form" or "vitality and sensibility" or "composition and handling"—must be considered the motor force in a work or visual art. But the realm to which this force can (and in the "fine" as opposed to the applied arts usually does) transport one is very far, I suggest, from being an unfurnished Nirvana. On the contrary, it is rich in human emotions. The response to landscape felt by Claude and Constable and Cézanne would not be communicated to us if these artists had not commanded the virtues of form ; but they did ; and in consequence, they make us participate in their response, and thus they multiply our delight in their work. Similarly, the response to human beauty expressed in the archaic Acropolis maidens, in the 5th century steles, and in the Hellenistic *Victory of Samothrace* infects me with a happiness I cannot consider valueless or illegitimate. Let me add that some works from Africa, the Pacific and Mexico carry terror or hatred ; and it seems unreasonable to blind oneself either to their plastic merits, or to their emotional beastliness. The Greek statuaries, whose art was no less religious in intention than the carved figures on the Chartres portals, differed from the barbarians by always fashioning their gods in the image of men. And this encourages us, at a time when such reassurance is peculiarly requisite, to believe inversely that men can be god-like.

If we find nothing exotic or unapproachable in most Greek sculpture, the vases remind us how unlike ourselves the Greeks must have been. (I am not speaking of the Minoan *japonaiseries* which are hardly represented in this exhibition.) Look at the drinking-horn in the shape of a boar's head (95)—how extraordinary to think that this outrageous object may, when new, have touched the lips of Sophocles. Or take another cup, No. 85 ; these queer, inhuman barbates, with drapery carefully dropped to exhibit their sex, are not satyrs or Lapiths but contemporaries of Pericles enjoying a symposium !

One of the most interesting, though not most beautiful, exhibits is the sculpture from a sarcophagus of the 3rd century A.D. (147). For this shows how the classical style developed into the Byzantine. The portraits from mummy-cases reveal a similar transition in the art of painting. Then a small but exquisite selection of ivories and textiles displays the flowering of the new art between the 6th and 12th centuries. Next comes a series of ikons among which are interspersed paintings by El Greco. I suspect that the influence of Byzantine painting upon Greco's mature style was much smaller than has lately been suggested. Do not the distortions of drawing in Tintoretto and Bassano, the violence of colour in the contemporary Roman mannerists, suffice as origins for Greco's singularities ? But I must not let my love of Venetian painting carry me on to the preserves of the *Kunstforscher*, where I should feel a fraudulent trespasser. Suffice it that Greco was a Greek, and that it is fascinating to confront the vase-painters with their hardly less strange successor.

The naïf paintings of the War of Independence, on the other hand, occupy disproportionate space, charming though they are. Four contemporary painters show that the Greeks, having learnt from Crete, from Egypt, and from Asia, now have the wisdom to learn from Paris. The collection of embroidery from the Islands is splendid, but I wish there were a greater variety of modern peasant pottery. The Skyros ware that alone is exhibited here is not so lovely as pots I have bought in Salonica for a few pence.

The far less rich show of 1942 was, I think, better displayed than this one, partly, no doubt, just because it was less rich and so less crowded. But also I seem to remember a fine prevailing whiteness. Nor is the present show any the gayer for a pan full of water and surrounded with flowers which attempts, presumably, to be Pompeian and succeeds only in suggesting the Brookwood Necropolis. But our gratitude to the organisers and lenders is immense. I look forward to visiting Burlington House repeatedly, and I recommend everyone who cares for visual art to do the same. Moreover, if our painters and sculptors were blessedly to find here some inspiration from the humanism of classical Greece . . . but such a hope is extravagant ! Is there a respectable artist alive daring enough to paint or carve an ideally beautiful human being ? Only one, that I can think of : Picasso.

ROGER MARVELL

## THE MOVIES

### "Love Eternal," at the Curzon

I had intended this week to deliver a set piece on *L'Eternel Retour* (let's keep the title), but since everyone knows already Cocteau's theme and something about his method, it may be better to take a good deal for granted.

One point that has not been made clear, I think, either by myself or others, is that *L'Eternel Retour* belongs wholly to the screen. It isn't a stage-play diverted ; only the camera could give us the visual perspectives, the surprises, the stressed objects, the touches of magic ; and the actions large and small that make up this drama have a continuity in which dialogue often plays a secondary part. Cocteau's choice of medium has not been accidental. It dates back to the silent film, and to Chaplin comedies rather than German expressionism. What drew him irresistibly—as readers of *Opium* and *Mon Premier Voyage* may remember—was the image-making possibility and the popular appeal. The poet, in Cocteau's view, is a maker who should use all the materials he can set hands on. "One must have," he has written, "not a style, but style." He would fashion art out of the cinema, as once out of vaudeville. "Can't be done !" the aesthetic purist will exclaim, turning back to his marbles and canvases, while at the other extreme film-fans may object (and do, as the press notices reveal) against this dignifying of their pet indulgence. But Cocteau shows that it can be done, that the film can be used, not merely to discover and transmit, but to create poetry.

Second point. That "poetry" consists essentially in images. Though *L'Eternel Retour* is articulate drama, everywhere the eye and not the ear receives the most telling impressions. Dramatic climaxes are seen, and—in an action that is tense from beginning to end—there are passages of a sustained beauty no other film has approached. Let me cite as an example the meeting of Patrice and Natalie in the garden at night, a scene that deliberately echoes Pelléas and Mélisande under the shadow of Golaud, and that invests the new pair of lovers with equal terror and beauty. What means has Cocteau employed ? The music of Auric certainly doesn't match Debussy's, the words by themselves would not convey Maeterlinck's immensities ; yet our emotions are as deeply stirred. Photography supplies two revela-

tions—in this shadowed garden with frogs croaking under the moonlit wall—that are breath-taking to encounter: Patrice, waiting alone by the pool and rippling the water, sees his uncle's figure appear in the reforming surface; and afterwards. when Natalie approaches, her lover retreats into profound shadow moving his cigarette to and fro in a semaphore that strangely underlines one's fears.—There, Cocteau might exclaim, are your words and music.

Third point. Critics who have appraised *L'Eternel Retour* at its true level—and there has been as pretty a division into sheep and goats as one could wish for—have tried hard to find the irritant source in this work of Cocteau's; for it doesn't, despite an extraordinary allure, at first sight altogether captivate. The blonde lovers? That curdled ideal certainly takes some swallowing, especially as the actress (Madeleine Sologne) already looks fated for Hollywood. Expression of the death-wish? Without it there would have been no Tristan and Isolde, no Paolo and Francesca. Incongruity in Cocteau's treatment of legend? No, no, no, there his manipulation is faultless; the dwarf, the "poisoned" cocktail, the estaminet brawl, the castle, the shot from the windows, the launch chug-chugging across the lake with its white scarf—these are the triumphs of an invention that began with the decision to wed the most operatic of themes with photographic black-and-white. Cocteau's mastery as a dramatist has always lain exactly here: he sets out to achieve a fantastic balance, with billiard cues, Hellenic torsos, *papier mâché* shields, a live horse, all perched one on another, and the result is a miracle of lightness and order.

Fourth point. Auric's music has hardly a memorable note. Intentional? I think so. It narrows the focus to the images on the screen. The share of the director, Jean Delannoy (and his cameraman and actors), in this act of creation, can't be easily estimated. At first I thought the camera lagged somewhat in imagination, but I have come to revise that opinion. Where the film slackens, to dote on its admixture of marble and flesh-and-blood, the fault is no doubt Cocteau's own, inherent in his choice of a romantic theme. But I don't find, after a third visit, that this heaviness too seriously discommodes.

The main point about *L'Eternel Retour*—a point one can't too often repeat—is that here, without any distortion of medium, is a mature work of art that embodies civilisation as surely as do Eliot's *Four Quartets*, Britten's Michelangelo Sonnets, and Henry Moore's shelter drawings. While the cinema (quite rightly, in general) keeps its eyes fixed on the immediate present, Cocteau offers it another way—that of vision and eternity. We aren't likely to be embarrassed by the number of his followers.

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

## RADIO NOTES

THANK goodness all unscripted discussions are not of the argle-bargle, "you're another" variety exemplified by the recent broadcast on Modern Art. In last week's *Questions in the Air* we were treated to an argument on the Veto which was enlightening in proportion to the mannerliness of the debaters. In fact, Sir William Beveridge and Mr. Zilliacus each listened to what the other had to say. Mr. Zilliacus, batting on what appeared to me a poorish wicket, yet contrived to score some runs; and if neither of the disputants succeeded in convincing the other (this was not to be expected), both helped to make the issue a good deal clearer. This was a very good piece of broadcasting.

The Light Programme seems to be looking up. At present it contains at least two regular programmes which would do credit to any service. *The World and His Wife*, being a magazine programme, can hardly avoid patchiness; but three excellent features out of five is good measure. Hardy Amies' account of the workings of *la haute couture* was so interesting—and so naturally delivered—that I wished it had been longer; C. A. Gibb's story of an 18th-century balloon trip was as funny as Edward Lear; and Ronald Searle's observations on being a prisoner of the Japanese were ruefully entertaining. Peter Watson is as self-effacing as a compère should be, but his script is rather flatly worded. Another programme worth watching masquerades under the non-commital title, *Music in Miniature*. This is one of those donkey-and-carrot programmes which seem to be part of the new educational drive. It consists of short pieces of the best music, carefully played and strung together without comment or announcement until the very end. The scheme has the advantage of compelling the listener who has liked one of the movements but does not know what it is, to hear the whole programme to the end in order to find out. The only disadvantage is that at present the pieces tread uncomfortably upon each other's heels. A pause of five seconds in between would make a lot of difference.

*The Birth of a Saboteur*, like a good many other features, would have been better as a plain talk. The successful conquest of fear is too delicate and elusive a subject to be dealt with as directly and prosaically as it was here. The script was unpretentious, agreeably sincere, and well spoken; but any attempt to convey complex sequences of action by means of "interior monologue" is doomed to failure, unless written by a poet of genius. The convention is inadequate because the words do not convey enough of what goes on in the mind at such moments, so that we are made immediately aware of the deficiencies of the medium and, apart from this, I seemed to feel that the end of the script rather left us in the air.

But how much better a dozen such programmes than the wretched affair entitled *A Glutton for Life*, which purported to draw a portrait of Guy de Maupassant. Not one moment of this conventional literary concoction gave me the slightest sense that any of those concerned, from the author to the actors, were in any vital way connected with their subject. For one thing the whole atmosphere was stodgily English, Maupassant (addressed as Guy and Guee by turns) being represented as a jolly Etonian living amid the surroundings of a Trollopian cathedral town. Lennox Berkeley's music was charming and right, but far too discreet to correct the emphatic ineptitudes of the script and production.

RECOMMENDATIONS. — *Sunday, February 24th.* C. E. M. Joad (6.15); Constable (Geoffrey Grigson, 7.30 p.m.); Jane Eyre (Episode 1, 8.30 p.m.); Over Ten Million (9.30 p.m.); Beethoven Recital (Mewton-Wood), 11.3 p.m.).

*Monday, February 25th.* The World and His Wife (L.P., 6.30 p.m.); The Rocking-Horse Winner (Midland, 8.40 p.m.); Up at the Villa (9.15 p.m.).

*Tuesday, February 26th.* Judgment Suspended (Forces Educ. Broadcasts, L.P., 3 p.m.); Personal Points (Revue, 11.3 p.m.).

*Wednesday, February 27th.* French for the Forces (Forces Educ. Broadcasts, L.P., 10 a.m.); Can I Help You? (Nat. Insurance Bill, 6.45 p.m.); Music of Our Time (Ansermet and Tertis, 7.40 p.m.).

*Thursday, February 28th.* L.C.C. Election Address (Henry Brooke, 9.15 p.m.).

*Friday, March 1st.* Can We Afford American Films? (7.30 p.m.); L.C.C. Election Address (Lord Latham, 9.15 p.m.); Recital (Kathleen Long, 10.30 p.m.).

EDWARD SACKVILLE WEST

## TOYNBEE HALL—THE CHILDREN'S THEATRE

*Great Expectations.* Dramatised by Alec Guinness.

Glyndebourne and Toynbee Hall, under the blessing of the L.C.C. Education Committee, have launched a children's theatre in East London, and before the company starts a tour of the provinces 2,400 L.C.C. Secondary schoolchildren will have seen Alec Guinness's sensitive and well-proportioned dramatisation of *Great Expectations*, both an excellent choice and a welcome revival. The chief danger to a play written for a wholly non-adult audience is the insinuating nature of didacticism and propaganda of any sort. Happily, the company claims on the programme that one of their chief reasons for choosing the piece was that they enjoyed it, and it was clearly this that made the whole thing energetic, fresh and delightful through twenty brief but fairly exacting scenes. The story-telling method of presentation was interesting, the production was astute and Miss Rosalind Atkinson and Mr. John Kidd, especially, rose to the spirit of magnified grotesquerie which glitters over the novel itself.

# Correspondence

## DIPLOMATIC APPOINTMENTS

SIR,—My questions to Mr. Hector McNeil concerning Foreign Service appointments may have "confused the issue" as you see it, but, judging from the verbal and written comments I have received, they have thrown a good deal of light on the issue as it is seen by a considerable number of Socialists. Some part of the confusion might be avoided, too, if reference were made to Hansard for the actual text—and context—of my remarks.

To begin with, there was only one case in which I specifically asked for the appointment of "a member of the Labour Party"—that of the post of permanent British representative on the Security Council of UNO. I pointed out that this was a position involving decisions of "an executive and policy-making character" and was not purely administrative, and, by implication, I expressed the view that the holder of it must be capable of expressing, completely and faithfully and, in an emergency, on his own initiative, the views and outlook of the present British Government. Were it possible within the limited scope of a supplementary question to express all that is in one's mind, I should have emphasised this view by suggesting that the holder of this post should be given the official status of a Minister of the Crown, Resident at the seat of UNO. If UNO is regarded—as the present Government appears to regard it—as an embryonic World Government, then the Security Council, which is the only organ of UNO which enjoys the power of enforcing its decisions, is an embryonic World Cabinet. Our Government should therefore have taken care to see that at least one of its members was a Democratic Socialist.

Secondly, on the general question of our overseas representation, I expressed dissatisfaction at "the continued appointment of non-Socialists to positions of high political importance." I did not ask that all Foreign Service appointments should go to Socialists. What I did indicate, by implication, was that non-Socialists (and, I might have added, anti-Socialists) were not, as a general rule, the most suitable people to represent this country abroad in positions of political responsibility such as that of Governor-General, Ambassador to a leading country or representative on one of the leading organs of UNO. It cannot be too often repeated that a man in such a position does not merely carry out instructions; by his words, acts and social behaviour he presents to the people of the country in which he is stationed a continuous picture of the British people and the British Government. The non-Socialists who are capable of presenting a true picture of Britain as it is after the political revolution of July 1945 are *raræ aves*. Let us seek them out, by all means; but it would be no more troublesome, and somewhat safer, to seek out a few Socialists as well.

Thirdly, I did ask that our Foreign Service (not specifically the Foreign *Office*, be it noted) should be *supplemented* by persons holding views in *sympathy* with those of the present Government. Is this an extravagant claim? It is notorious that the Foreign Service—and here I gratuitously include the Foreign Office—is full of people, holding high positions, whose views are out of sympathy with those of the Labour Government. Labour M.P.s who have been on Parliamentary delegations abroad have been shocked at what they have heard and seen amongst some of our foreign representatives. The fact is that most of these people are drawn from the narrow social groups which have ruled over this country for over a hundred years and which have formed the social basis of the Tory and Liberal Parties alike. Politically the old ruling classes have at long last been overthrown by the victory of the common people. The important question is whether that victory is to be frustrated by the retention in positions of power and influence of persons who are closely linked, socially and psychologically, with the defeated classes.

House of Commons. WILLIAM WARBEY

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SIR,—Your article "The Policy and the Instrument" did something to repair the damage caused by the form in which Mr. Warbey expressed his

dissatisfaction with Mr. Bevin's recent appointments. Nothing could be more misleading than to suggest that the weaknesses in our Foreign Service could be remedied by the appointment of Socialists. What is required is not the substitution of a progressive for a reactionary ideology but the organisation of an office capable of carrying out the modern requirements of diplomacy.

You suggest that Sir Maurice Peterson's term in Madrid—he was suddenly replaced by Lord Templewood in 1940—renders him unsuitable for Moscow. In the case of a career-diplomat, this seems to me an irrelevant objection since I have never heard the vaguest suggestion that Sir Maurice was selected for Madrid because of his ideological affinity with General Franco. A more solid objection would be that he is an ageing and tired man. Someone younger and more vigorous might be better suited to this wearing job.

Reform of our Foreign Service will not be accomplished by trying to substitute Labour men for career-diplomats, but by improving the quality of the latter. During my five years with the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office I soon found how little Party labels had to do with efficiency in political Intelligence. The outstanding "finds" in Italian, French and German Intelligence happened to be men with Conservative views. It made no difference, because we were united in our determination to wear down the professional diplomats' ignorance of and contempt for serious political Intelligence and to ensure that the higher authorities were presented with a realistic picture of the state of affairs. The issue was never Left versus Right. Nearly always it was a dog-fight between one party which was determined to keep its head in the sand till the crisis was unavoidable and another party determined to face the facts in good time. On the whole, the career-diplomats were inclined to take the first course and the temporaries, whatever their political views, the second.

What disturbs me is that the Italian, French and German experts with whom I worked during the war have all been got rid of, despite their Conservative views. They were squeezed out because they were awkward men who refused to be ostriches. As a result, the Intelligence in London available on France, Italy and Germany is probably by now as bad as it was before the war. I fear that under Sir Orme Sargent, a brilliant career-diplomat of the conventional kind, this process will not be arrested. Are the men in the Foreign Service who could improve the situation and attract men like them to be given the chance to do so?

R. H. S. CROSSMAN

House of Commons.

## AUSTRIA

SIR,—The letter signed "Military Government Officer," which you published on February 9th, mentions Franz Knappitsch, the recently arrested leader of a new "Democratic" Party in Austria. The letter suggests two things which need, if not correction, at least amplification. In the first place it suggests that his Democratic Party was countenanced by the British authorities since it was neither Fascist nor Nazi. In the second place it gives the impression that Knappitsch was arrested by the British for political reasons.

I am one of many British officers who have met and been entertained by Knappitsch. His house at Meyerhofen near Friesach was a popular resort for British officers at week-ends and he was a gay and generous host. To my knowledge many junior officers accepted his political protestations at their face value. The combination of the word Democratic with the prosperous and cultivated *ambiance* of Meyerhofen was insidious, and I saw many British officers coming under the spell of Knappitsch and his friends from the other big houses and castles in the neighbourhood. But a little cross-examination soon revealed where Knappitsch's political sympathies really lay. He was once a follower of Prince Starhemberg (Austria's first home-grown Fascist), and still hopes for a revival of some such authoritarian aristocratic regime. He believes in Democracy so long as the power remains in the hands of the "best people"! He is incorrigibly anti-Russian. He boasts of his association with the Duke of Windsor (an association claimed by every *châtelain* in the British Zone). In fact he combines all the ingredients demanded by the best recipes for small-time Fascists. He was even smart enough to get himself arrested by the S.S. just before the collapse of the Nazis.

His present arrest was, however, not political. He was arrested by the civilian Austrian police for concealing stocks of petrol, motor cars and other Black Market materials. A small hoard of Florentine *objets d'art* was discovered in one of his outhouses. But more interesting and, in the long view, more sinister, was the disclosure of over a hundred pairs of jack-boots. Even Knappitsch found it hard to laugh that off. Does "Military Government Officer" still not smell a rat?

PAUL REILLY

3 Alexander Place,
Brompton Road, London, S.W.7.

## TEACHING HOSPITALS

SIR,—In your issue of February 2nd, you write that "there are eleven Teaching Hospitals in England and Wales." This is an understatement of the position—there are actually nearly double that number. There are in London alone twelve very famous teaching hospitals which are "recognised Schools" of London University; they receive grants allocated by the University Court, which since the reconstruction in 1929 has been entrusted with the distribution of the grant from the Exchequer formerly allocated by the University Grants Committee. There is a thirteenth teaching hospital recognised by the University as a School for External Students in Medicine, but this school receives no grants from the Court. There are a further eight teaching hospitals connected with the provincial Universities (Birmingham, Bristol, Durham, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Wales).

You write further that "the medical schools under the Universities are outside ministerial jurisdiction." This statement is unhappily no longer accurate; just a year ago the then Minister of Health announced the decision of the Cabinet to enforce by financial sanctions two recommendations which had formed part of the Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Medical Education set up by the Minister of Health in March, 1942, under the chairmanship of Sir Wm. Goodenough. The Minister declared (*Hansard*, January 18th, 1945) the intention of the Government to enforce by manipulation of the Exchequer Grant acceptance by the Universities responsible for Medical Schools of two recommendations of that Committee (1) Adoption of co-education in the Medical Schools; (2) A "drastic overhaul" of the medical curriculum to be initiated by the G.M.C., a body wholly outside the Universities, and under the general jurisdiction of the Privy Council.

The University Grants Committee, which had been the distributing agency up to 1929, has scrupulously avoided imposing conditions of any kind in its allocation of grants. Immediately upon publication of the statement in the House on January 18th, the Court of the University conveyed a formal protest against this quite unprecedented encroachment upon the educational autonomy previously enjoyed without question by all the Universities. London University was naturally much more profoundly concerned because of its predominant position in medical education. Its medical schools surpass, both in number of Institutions and students attending them, all the other Universities in the country put together. Details furnished in the Goodenough Committee's report, p. 260, demonstrate that considerably more than half of all medical students south of the Tweed receive their training in London medical schools. No opportunity has yet been given to Parliament either by the late or by the present Government to express the considered judgment of the nation's


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representatives on this threat to the independence of the Universities in educational matters.

House of Commons. E. GRAHAM LITTLE

[We were guilty of a slip in referring to eleven Teaching *Hospitals*: we should have said eleven University centres which confer medical degrees.—ED. *N.S. & N.*]

## GAS—THE TRUTH

SIR,—I have worked in one of the largest gas-plants for many years. Your correspondent, Norman MacKenzie, says he sees no reason to dispute the company's case that reduced pressure was due solely to shortage of labour and lack of storage capacity. This is sheer nonsense. Full gas pressure was maintained right through the war, except when mains were damaged through enemy action.

There is no shortage of labour, but there is a considerable wastage of that precious commodity, and that wastage has been noticeable for over two years. This works now gives employment to women, Italian prisoners of war and soldiers.

During a recent cold spell, this station had seven retort houses in work. Despite the need for more gas, 20 retorts ("scurfers") in each house were left uncharged; the men were prepared to do extra work but the company refused to pay for it. In the bad old days, not so long ago, men were called upon to do extra work *without* payment. Retorts have been drawn before they were fully burnt off in order to charge again quickly. But not on this occasion, because the men would get extra payment.

Soldiers who have been sent in to make gas are doing such jobs as whitewashing retort houses, clearing up litter which has been lying around for years, working as fitters' mates and generally doing anything but help to produce gas. A percentage, of course, are doing retort house work; but what can one expect from men who do all this extra, filthy and distasteful work for half-a-crown a day? I have spoken to these men and asked them if they intend to become gas-workers on demobilisation, and without exception their reply has been "Not —— likely."

The real reason that the gas industry has been unable to get fresh labour is *not* wholly due, as Mr. MacKenzie suggests, to six years of conscription. It is largely due to the fact that casual labour has been unobtainable. During the war there has been no crowd outside the gate at 5 a.m., hoping for a day's work; and I hope there never will be again. The gas companies will then have to pay wages commensurate with the arduous and unattractive nature of the work. Gas workers have been receiving less than unskilled munition workers during the war. Skilled fitters employed at Beckton received much lower wages than unskilled munition workers in a safe area during the war! Therefore, the official who told your correspondent that few people leave the industry once they have entered it has another guess coming when the E.W.O. is removed from the industry. Despite statements made to Mr. MacKenzie that men are willing to leave their former trades in order to enter the gas industry I have not heard of one case at Beckton; and such a phenomenon could not pass unnoticed here. One man sent here as a labourer by the labour exchange was asked by the firm's labour master if he intended making the gas works his career. The man replied that having seen the place he didn't intend to start.

If Mr. MacKenzie considers £4 7*s.* for 47 hours "relatively good," one wonders what he would consider "relatively bad." He also says, "with overtime a man receives about £5 5*s.* before paying income tax," which in plain language means that the hourly rate of pay for overtime works out at less than the normal rate.

The Co-partnership Scheme is *not* a profit-sharing scheme in the true sense of the phrase, because it is in the nature of a compulsory investment scheme whereby part of a bonus on wages is held by the company and is not withdrawable. Not every employee is asked to become a Co-partner, and the scheme itself is used chiefly as a counter to militant trade unionism.

W. J. T.

## MR. BODKIN AND MR. FRY

SIR,—To argue with Mr. Bodkin would be as unprofitable as distasteful. I wish to state that between our first meeting in January 1910, and the Exhibition at the end of that year, I saw Roger Fry constantly; that his enthusiasm for the artists he was planning to present was intense when we met and increased as he saw more of their work; that he selected the pictures himself and selected them in a mood of happy appreciation.

May I add that, like most of Roger Fry's friends, I took the passage from *The Approach to Painting*, quoted by Mr. Mortimer, to insinuate that somehow or other Roger made money out of the business: this insinuation I judged too silly to need contradiction. Now, it seems, Mr. Bodkin has eaten his words, and I hope he enjoyed them more than I did. At least he has said that he did not mean what he appeared to mean. We must conclude that his power of expression is even feebler than we had supposed.

CLIVE BELL

## BUS SERVICES

SIR,—Is there a law of nature governing and determining the irrational inefficiency of the London bus services? Yesterday I joined a longish queue at Victoria hoping for a No. 11 to take me to Chancery Lane. I waited long and at last four No. 11*s* arrived one behind the other. The first two were packed and most of the queue swarmed round them trying to push their way in. I nipped off to the third No. 11, which contained two passengers, one inside and one outside. The fourth No. 11 contained one boy. The convoy of four trailed along all the way to Chancery Lane, the same scene of confusion enacted at each stopping place. When I left at Chancery Lane, the first two buses were still packed, the third had sixteen passengers, and the fourth four. At Whitehall two girls were waved away from the first two buses with a "Full up!" but, as by the time that they moved back to the third and fourth, these had started to move on and refused to stop, they were left behind. Obviously the object of a No. 11 bus is not to transport passengers, but, like the heavenly bodies, to move in a mysterious way and to provide work for a driver and conductor.

LEONARD WOOLF

## WILD GOOSE CHASE

SIR,—Mr. Fitter's article on the Wild Goose Chase was the more enjoyable for the fact that ornithology is so rarely mentioned in the NEW STATESMAN AND NATION. May I therefore be permitted one small carping criticism to the effect that Mr. Fitter might well have given the credit for the original identification of the Lesser White-fronted Geese to Lt.-Cdr. Peter Scott and Mr. Howard Davis, who did in fact discover their presence a week before Mr. Fitter's visit.

This identification was remarkable by reason that Peter Scott went to this particular marsh with the deliberate intention of investigating the possible occurrence of Lesser Whitefronts there, because the migration route from North Russia of the particular Whitefronted Geese wintering in this area crosses that of the Lesser Whitefronts which breed in Lapland and winter eastwards from the Hortobagy Plain in Hungary.

There is one further undoubted occurrence of the Lesser Whitefronted Goose in this country which unfortunately is not officially recorded. In January 1943, an adult male Lesser Whitefronted Goose turned up on Mr. Will Tinsley's farm on the Wash and joined some imported pinioned Lesser Whitefronts kept in a field in front of the farmhouse. There was no record of any escapes at this time, and it seems obvious that this was a genuine wild bird.

JAMES ROBERTSON JUSTICE

Orchardton,
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YP. 33

# BOOKS IN GENERAL

It seems unlikely that there will ever be a revival of Gissing like the revival of Trollope. For one thing Gissing is less of an entertainer; for another he writes largely of the unglamorous lower middle class; and though his industry was not less than Trollope's (he produced three novels, for example, between July 1885 and March 1886) he writes with far less gusto. Then again Gissing awaits a biographer: if people knew more about him they might feel a stronger inclination to read him. As things are, his life has to be pieced together from his works and from fragments of criticism and reminiscence, some of it perhaps not yet published. There is a *roman à clef* about Gissing—*The Private Life of Henry Maitland* by Morley Roberts; there is a sympathetic essay by Thomas Seccombe; there are the opinions and recollections of Mr. Wells; there is Mr. Swinnerton's not over-generous monograph; and there is a valuable volume of letters, published by Constable in 1927. There were clouds over Gissing's life, and perhaps the time has not yet come for them to be explained to the public; but until his story is fully and sympathetically told, he will continue to be obscured by the false and superficial legend that attaches to him. If one reason for the neglect of Gissing is that his novels are hard to come by, another is that potential readers are put off by that Gissing legend; they suppose that his writings are depressing, seedy and squalid, and nothing more—the work, in fact, of a hack or drudge turned sour-puss. He has been too often condemned unread, on the strength of his admittedly somewhat drab "realism," but he has even to-day a faithful if not large public, and it happens from time to time that a reader prejudiced against him becomes, after a taste of Gissing, an addict.

Gissing is said to have intended to emulate Balzac and produce an English *Comédie Humaine*. With Balzac he is hardly comparable, but taken together his novels constitute a wider view of society in his own day than might be supposed. "A master of explanation and description," said Seccombe, "rather than of animated narrative or sparkling dialogue, he lacked . . . the brilliance and energy of a consummate style." Well, Balzac's style was not exactly consummate, but he more than made up in force and scope what he lacked in strict elegance. The Gissing novels do not dazzle or overwhelm, they burn with a clear and even flame that lights up a whole phase of English social history; and their author has at once an air of conviction and a power of story-telling that lead the reader steadily onwards in that state of bemusement which it is the novelist's first business to induce. In a careful, often oddly formal or understandably trite style, he has caught and fixed in countless forms the vulgarity, the materialism and the social injustice of his late-Victorian day in a manner and on a scale attempted by nobody else; if he often describes drab lives in a monochromatic setting, he is after all writing about England, and it is not because he prefers them; he opposes them all the time quietly, firmly, gravely, with his own ideas or ideals of culture, leisure and civilisation; he criticises the society he explains and describes—a society which was largely uncritical of itself.

*Demos*, Smith and Elder told Gissing in 1882, "is too painful to please the ordinary novel reader and treats of scenes that can never attract the subscribers to Mr. Mudie's Library." Four years later Gissing himself said he scarcely thought his writing would ever be popular, because the writers who helped him most were French or Russian, and he had not much sympathy with English points of view. And after his death in 1903, *The Times* remarked that he had valued his artistic conscience above popularity: this means that he valued his own taste above popular "taste," and that although he was evidently fascinated by the movement of life around him, he disliked and mistrusted its main trends. He did not distrust only the uncouth behaviour of the denizens of a materialistic and industrialised country, and the contrast between present ugliness and past grace. Like Hardy, Gissing took a grave view of the world; in his own way he was just as much weighed down by human sorrows. If we are justified in taking Henry Ryecroft as his author's mouthpiece—and it is evident that the "private papers" are to some extent autobiographical—Gissing was worried about more than the way things were going; he was worried about the sorry scheme of things entire. History, says Ryecroft, is a long moan of anguish, a long record of injustice. But where Hardy questions Providence, Gissing seems content not to go deeper than questioning mankind itself about its follies and miseries. In his novels he enters into them and displays them, for, just as a touch of madness is necessary to a poet, so a novelist must be able to lose himself in common follies: directly the novelist stands aside from his fellow-beings and says, "But they're acting like lunatics," he is in danger of ceasing to be a novelist and becoming a philosopher. Gissing in the role of Ryecroft could afford to stand aside, to indulge the luxury of detachment which the hard-working novelist could not afford. Ryecroft says that his worst trouble is "wonder at the common life of man": it seems to him incredible, oppressive, haunting. "What lunatic," he asks, "ever dreamt of things less consonant with the calm reason than those which are thought and done every minute in every community of men called sane?" Then the ringing grooves of change rang a little too loud for Gissing, so Ryecroft picks on science as the greatest insanity. Science, he says, is to be hated and feared, because he sees it as something that will destroy all simplicity and gentleness of life, and all the beauty of the world; that will restore barbarism under a mask of civilisation; will darken men's minds and harden their hearts; and will bring vast conflicts in which mankind's laborious advances will be lost in "blood-drenched chaos." It seems a little hard that science should be held to darken men's minds, since its aim is the opposite. And if history is an anguished moan of injustice, is there so much to lose by change? No, it is not from science that Gissing-Ryecroft stands apart, but from the fierce unreasoning energy of the mass of mankind—from action in short. He admits, indeed, that it is as idle to quarrel with science as with "any other force of nature," but he will stand apart, he will find his own salvation in detachment. In reading a Gissing novel, however much one is absorbed in the story, one is always conscious of the presence of the author, fastidious and aloof.

Gissing's attitude is sometimes more explicit in the letters than in the novels, as when he says: "Two things I aim at in my work: the love of everything that is beautiful, and the contempt of vulgar conventionality." Even as quite a young man he was growing to feel, he said, "that the only thing known to us of absolute value is artistic perfection." Two months later he announced: "My attitude henceforth is that of the artist pure and simple." He goes on to describe the artist's sensation of detachment.

> In the midst of the most serious complications of life, I find myself suddenly possessed with a great calm, withdrawn as it were from the immediate interests of the moment, and able to regard everything as a picture. I watch and observe myself just as much as others.

Not long afterwards, in a letter to his brother, he says:

> How I laughed the other day on recalling your amazement at my theories of Art for Art's sake! Well, I cannot get beyond it . . . I can get savage over social iniquities, but even then my rage at once takes the direction of planning revenge in artistic work.

Certainly Gissing has not been generally thought of as a believer in the doctrine of Art for Art's sake, as an aesthete or escapist, but such in fact he was. His first concern was to make a living by fulfilling his creative function as an artist; what enabled him to do so was the process of taking "revenge" upon vulgar conventionality, the spirit and behaviour of the common people, social iniquities, semi-education, blatant money-making, the trials of married life, and all the other things that saddened or disgusted him. His books are a long, half-fascinated shudder of withdrawal from his environment—towards what? Not merely into himself, but towards all that to him stood for civilisation, towards peace in the first place. War, he wrote to his son in 1899, is "a horrible thing . . . Never suppose that victories in war are things to be proud of." The Boer War—"this scoundrelly war," Gissing called it—was the culmination of the period in which he had lived and worked; he did not long survive it. "This reckless breaking with the fine English tradition," he wrote, "is a sad proof of what evil can be wrought by inculcating the spirit of vulgar pride and savage defiance." And a little later, looking more clearly and steadily forward than most of his contemporaries, Kipling included: "Who knows what fantastic horrors lie in wait for the world?" Dying in 1903, he was spared the fantastic horrors of the two Great Wars.

Peace was a condition of the leisure for which Gissing longed and which would have enabled him to be what he thought he wanted to be, instead of a novelist writing hard for his living. Leisure would not have meant idleness: it would have meant the chance to write what he would most have liked to write, books doubtless nearer to *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft, By the Ionian Sea* and *Veranilda* than to the rest of his work—books of travel or meditation, or of escape into the classical past of Greece and Rome. It would have meant escape from London into fresh air, escape from England into the sun, escape into a library of his own with a thick carpet, and a dining room of his own with good food and wine in abundance and well-trained servants, escape into the society of quiet, kind, cultivated people, well bred and well fed. Gissing, in his inmost being, may have been a scholar, a mild hedonist, a fastidious quietist, but it is difficult to believe that that was the whole of his inmost being, for how could such a person have found the energy to write as much and as vigorously as he did, even though his own living and the maintenance of a family had to be gained? Had he been the comparatively feeble man of his dreams he might have passed his life merely as some kind of employee, a literary journalist perhaps, or some such drudge. But he was also a man of independence, energy and initiative, with a strong talent for writing novels, and capable of reacting strongly and continuously against what seemed to him the ugliness and misery of his times and his surroundings; and it looks as if it might be safe to suppose that Gissing himself was not too distantly related to that character in *New Grub Street* who spoke of having had "moments" in his life when he was free from "the temptations and harassings of sexual emotion" and who thought that what was called love was "mere turmoil." It is possible that Gissing's wistful image of himself as a refined scholar living in freedom and comfort, his escape-dream, was the creation of a man strongly sexed and greatly overworked, and that the image and the dream were necessary to sustain him: frustration is often necessary to an artist, and without the feeling that he was being thwarted, Gissing might have been a far less copious and powerful writer. If he had not been so much at odds with his destiny—that is to say, with his circumstances, and with the place and time he lived in—he would not so actively have taken "revenge" in the name of Art for Art's sake. His escapist dream is by no means to be condemned; it was the formula from which he built up his protest, on behalf of what he rightly believed to be civilised values, against the "vulgar pride" of a civilisation heading straight for war, for "fantastic horrors," for the ironing-out of idiosyncrasy and for a sapping of the private life.

WILLIAM PLOMER

## TWO FOREIGNERS IN FRANCE

**In Golden Spurs.** By DIANA DE BOSMELET. *Frederick Muller.* 6s.
**Wars I Have Seen.** By GERTRUDE STEIN. *Batsford.* 15s.

*In Golden Spurs* is the title oddly given to an account of the experiences in wartime France of an Englishwoman married to a French officer. It is a very slight affair, and though it is written in the first person the actual text is largely the work, it appears, of a friend of Mme de Bosmelet. The general impression made by the book, despite some errors of detail, is of entire sincerity and truthfulness. Mme de Bosmelet, who lived in a Norman *château* famous for its beauty, begins by describing her life during the phoney war. Then she was caught with her two small children in the nightmare exodus of May 1940, upon the crowded roads beneath the German dive-bombing. Next she lived in hiding at La Roche-sur-Yon, the inhabitants concealing her from the Germans with the greatest kindness and courage. At last, through what she considers to be a miracle, she managed to take her children through the German guards into the unoccupied zone, where she found her husband. (His adventures in the Army during the collapse had been equally extraordinary.) The story ends with their escape to America by way of Spain after a variety of agonising failures.

There is nothing here that throws new light on the events described: the book confirms everything I have heard in France, and it reveals a generous heart. With what sympathy the author writes of her husband's Senegalese batman! The French she admires, not sentimentally, but because she understands them; and her experience of them during the invasion and occupation increased this admiration. In Mme de Bosmelet, who has no intellectual pretensions, we see how love of husband and children can lead a foreigner to a profound feeling for the country of her adoption.

Miss Stein is an American lady who had made her home in France, and stayed there after the Armistice. In 1943 she had the notion of writing an account of her experiences, which she continued to do until the Americans arrived in her village. Her book demands uncommon patience from the reader because of its diffuseness, reminding one of those eager, breathlessly voluble old dears, once so plentiful in the *pensions* of Bordighera and the "private hotels" of Broadstairs, who get caught up in every other sentence, start it again, repeat themselves indefatigably, and finding their vocabulary quite inadequate to their excitement, ring the changes on a few such epithets as "nice," "sad," "kind," "quaint" and "peculiar." Miss Stein's favourite word is "funny": the Germans are funny, the *maquis* is funny, almost everything that happened in France between the Armistice and the Liberation is funny. She does talk about the difficulty of getting enough food (she had the luck to live in one of the best fed regions of France); she even notices that her neighbours do not like being ordered about. But there is little sign in her book that she ever began to grasp the humiliation and spiritual distress in which the French were plunged. As I pushed my way through her pages, they made me wonder whether everything I had read by Frenchmen describing the years of occupation was a pretence; whether all that my friends in France had told me came from a collective hallucination. Miss Stein's lack of understanding would be shocking, if it was not comic.

Her bottomless frivolity makes her a champion of Pétain. "I always thought he was right," she declares, "to make the armistice; in the first place, it was more comfortable for us who were here"; and then, feeling perhaps that even such praise as this may sound insufficient, she continues: "and in the second place, it was an important element in the ultimate defeat of the Germans." Her explanation of this is a trifle confused. The Germans, it seems, were surprised by the French collapsing so soon, and they don't like being surprised. They "knew Pétain was a man of his word so they were not worried about what was behind them so off they rushed to the Channel." Then

> They saw that their armament was not equal to the task and so they had to wait. America came to the help of England in supplying material and by the time the Germans were ready it was too late, too late. And then came the battle of London, and it was too late. This is what Pétain meant when once he was asked who was winning the war, the Germans or the English, he pointed to his own breast and answered I.

It will come as a surprise to some of us to learn that what Miss Stein calls the "battle of London" was won with American material. We fancied that the fighter-pilots and their Spitfires, to say nothing of the obduracy of Londoners, were home-made. But her version must be correct, if it helps to clear Pétain (and I cannot see how it does). Very odd, isn't it, somebody may ask, that a lady called Stein should be so enthusiastic for a man who persecuted the Jews? But a friend told her that Pétain had said to somebody, "As for Freemasons I hate them, as for Communists, I am afraid of them, as for the Jews, it is not my fault." And presumably if he was not responsible for persecuting the Jews, it didn't matter what he did to Freemasons, Communists and Gaullists. Can it be that Miss Stein caught some of her views from Bernard Fay, a friend whom she quotes and who was one of the most notorious collaborators? But do not imagine that she is prejudiced: she is quite as amiable about the F.F.I. as she is about Pétain. Whatever is, is right—or, at any rate, is funny.

The interest of her book, in my opinion the only interest, lies in the character of the author, which may help us to understand the smug contempt with which Europe is regarded by the average American, a contempt painfully displayed in the conduct of the U.S. troops in France. Miss Stein is obviously brave, and can talk shrewdly about what she understands. She likes a chat with her neighbours, she seems sometimes on the brink of discovering that they have strong emotions. But she has lived, it seems, for most of her life in France, as she might have lived in Zululand, without attaining any fellow-feeling with the natives. One is left wondering how anybody, however self-centred and unimaginative, could preserve through the experiences that were hers such unawareness and such insensibility.

RAYMOND MORTIMER

## MR. MASSINGHAM'S NEW NOVEL

**The Harp and the Oak.** By HUGH MASSINGHAM. *Cresset Press.* 9s. 6d.

It is understandable that there is a public for our short stories, but somebody also reads, and therefore incites the publishers to produce, the contemporary English novel. Who? I think I have found out. It is an association of women, or, rather, of strong ladies, members of which follow or precede me all over London. As a body, they have decided to join the *League for Sanity in Art*, but not until it gets a little smarter. Each member looks, dresses and behaves exactly like the rest. She wears a dark blue jockey's cap with a swollen crown (above the peak of which is poised a miniature regimental badge in diamonds), a bright brown fur coat, and a faint, courageous lady-smile. Both my quotations from her will be verbatim. At the Picasso exhibition she stood next to me, accompanied by her child, who whinnied at a picture. "But darling," she said


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in her unnecessarily calm voice, the kind of voice that can never quite lie and never quite tell the truth, "the man has a perfect right to paint like that if he wants to. As long as you're not taken in, darling." I cannot visit a lending library, or a large bookshop—excepting, naturally, public libraries, the London Library, or Zwemmer's—without meeting her, and as I have never seen her look at books other than novels, I am certain that it is she who is the dictatress of our fiction. It was in a lending library in Wigmore Street that I overheard her rejecting a suggestion of the assistant's. "No, I don't really want anything re*alistic*, or sort of terribly *good*. I want something . . . *you* know." Yes, we do know. A hot-water bottle for her tiny, chilly lady-brains. And this is why, meanwhile, our novels are so terribly cosy, so terribly aloof, and so terrible.

Well, she is not going to be best pleased with Mr. Massingham's new novel, the whole of which she will find, thank God, in questionable taste. She suspects that novels are about what happens when people get to know one another; that this must be performed against some sort of background, and that possibly there will be a central theme or "idea" behind the action. But she insists that unless the theme and the people are reassuring, the background must be historical or remote. Under no circumstances will she tolerate a novel dealing objectively with the social realities of to-day. Not only is Mr. Massingham's theme anti-Semitism, but his background is an English village of 1942, and several of his characters are both unreassuring, and exactly the sort of people the lady is likely to know, and rather admire.

The author introduces us to two British subjects, a retired, optimistic, Jewish don, Dr. Victor Abrahams, and his timid Austrian wife, Ilse. In view of the war, Victor wishes to grow food on a long-abandoned village recreation ground, which forms part of his property, and proposes, in exchange, to build the community a village hall. *The Harp and the Oak* is the history of his overthrow. If, by mistake, our dictatress reads it, she will try to dispose of it, first, by denying that active anti-Semitism is possible in rural England, and, secondly, by saying (because her mind works that way) that, anyhow, the author knows nothing of country life or habits. The answer to the first is that anti-Semitism, that infallible sign of a second-rate intelligence, is a more widespread and virulent disease in England than is commonly supposed; and the answer to the second is that the author (as is not surprising in a member of his family) knows his seasons and crops, his country labourers and their employers as intimately as any Englishman writing to-day. But instead of approaching them with that quietly snobbish reverence to which we are accustomed, he treats them with balance and detachment. This must sound commonplace enough as an achievement, and so it would be, in an American or European novel. In England, however, it borders on treason. Authors can be as searching as they choose about towns and their inhabitants, but they examine the countryside at their peril.

Mr. Massingham's book is populous, but the characters are convincingly alive because each has been conceived as a whole; we find none of that overlapping which besets the novelist who is not principally interested in human beings. There is, for example, a clergyman in whom inefficacy reaches inspiration. The portrait of the local bigwig, Mr. Westcott, is skilful, veracious and profound. These are the words with which he soothes his wife (a member of my association) about Dr. Abrahams. It is the voice of Non-Intervention itself:

> "I knew you were going to be on his side," his wife said, helplessly.
>
> "You know nothing of the sort, my dear Gertrude."
>
> "But you're not going to do anything."
>
> "No, I'm not going to do anything." He put the book down, carefully turning the corner of the page. "Shall I tell you why? Because, my dear girl, there is no need for me to do anything. Dr. Abrahams is digging his own grave so fast that there's no need for anybody to give him a hand. I am not against Jews, as you know—I have no views on the subject—and therefore I can say things without being accused of prejudice. Put a problem to a Jew, and he may find the right answer, but you may be certain that he will express it in the wrong way. A Jew may do the wrong thing in the wrong way, or the right thing in the wrong way—he will never, by any conceivable chance, do the wrong thing or the right thing in the right way. Dr. Abrahams is no exception. You can depend on him to make an ass of himself."

Although Ilse is frightened of the Westcotts from the beginning, she underestimates them. It is precisely the mistake that people like Ilse would make, and the author hits off her reason for making it in a sentence:

> The room put both Victor and Ilse in a good humour. Victor recognised the ugly and cumbersome furniture—it reminded him of the university, the coltish parties, the little iced cakes, the tepid coffee. The room reassured Ilse, but for a different reason. It showed her that the Westcotts had no taste, and she concluded, quite wrongly, that they could therefore have little influence.

Lest readers should gather that Mr. Massingham has written some sort of glum tract on the virtues of toleration, or is recklessly solicitous for Dr. Abrahams, I will make one more quotation:

> "The great thing to remember when dealing with the poor, Ilse," Victor had once said, "is never to patronise them. One must be oneself. Be natural. Never talk down to them; simply behave as one would to any other friend."
>
> Every Saturday he held a little court for these same poor: the "hands," as he called them, presented themselves at the cottage, and were duly paid their wages. . . . Victor invariably dressed himself carefully for the occasion. . . . He wore a cricketing shirt, with short sleeves, and open at the neck; a pair of brown corduroy trousers, fastened by a leather belt with a silver clasp; heavy boots with hooks for the laces. They were solid, unpretentious clothes, suitable for the country, but somehow they failed to make him look convincing. For the shirt was too clean, and his flesh below the short sleeves prickled from the cold, while on his little finger, the diamond winked persistently.
>
> Victor's approach to them was wholly superficial and sentimental; spiritually he developed a squint whenever he looked at the country poor . . .

It will be seen that I have not outlined the plot of *The Harp and the Oak*. I have avoided doing so deliberately, because I don't want to diminish the appetite of prospective readers for a book which is as serious as it is amusing, and as credible, alas, as it is dramatic.

BRIAN HOWARD

## THE RED VICAR

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appealed to the Prophets and Fathers; a Catholic who crossed his bishops; an Anglican clergyman who hung the red flag in his church when Bolshevism was anti-God. Not only did he give all his own doings a strong individual twist, but he seems to have provoked all who came in contact with him to their own highest pitch of selfhood, to moments of the purest self-revelation. The Chestertons, the Bishop of Exeter (see "This England" for January 26th), Percy Dearmer, Dean Inge, Canon Lilley and others are here caught in naked clinical perfection. A fan-dancer friend of Noel's, Julie Emerald, when first asked to meet his wife, said: "Shall I come as a lady or as myself?" It was agreed that she should come as herself. When "taken to tidy herself before lunch" she "took out her front curls and pinned them carefully to the pin-cushion, remarking: 'A present from the boys, me dear.'" Pork-butcher city councillors, antagonistic churchwardens and organists, blimps of various kinds in various contexts seem to have fallen before Noel, condemned solely out of their own mouths, self-stripped under the light of his eye.

It is not derogatory (*cf.* Buddha, St. Francis, St. Ignatius Loyola) to suggest that Noel would not have got away with all he did at Thaxted if he had been less well-born and well connected, or if Lady Warwick had not been the patroness: his bishop sometimes happened to be his cousin. He did not, indeed, forgo great worldly wealth or position (his father, Roden Noel, was a simple, modest poet and man of letters), but his whole style and setting and habits of action were aristocratic—assured, utterly careless of "respectable" prejudice and opinion, when necessary rather high-handed and peremptory, always charming. A man with just his same opinions, but without his background might have made an awful mess. In fact, just before Noel was inducted to the living, a Socialist clergyman had held forth outside the Thaxted Guildhall and infuriated the people by his tactlessness. As he moved off under police protection he exclaimed: "If I have chastised you with whips, there is coming one among you to chastise you with scorpions." At the induction angry crowds waited to stone the bishop.

Noel did chastise; the Cleansing of the Temple was his type of Christian action; he saw Jesus as a militant revolutionary heretic, and formed himself after that pattern. But he was never bitter and never merely negative: the services at Thaxted, the beauty of the church, the whole popular organisation of parish life were the embodiment of his doctrine which those who jeered might judge. Not every parish can have Holst to direct the music and Franklin Dyall to read the lessons; but one is led by this book to wonder again at the reckless ignorance with which the average country clergyman throws away the good things and the chances still given him by his extraordinary Mother, the Church of England, and to hope that even now perhaps men of Noel's stature can here and there be found to swallow the Articles. On the purely political side, the open, fresh, knobbly individualism he kept through all his Socialist doctrine is like the sound of trumpets when a fog of secret, unimaginative and inefficient bureaucracy billows over what is colourful and grand and turns vivid spirits to melancholy.

HUMPHRY HOUSE

## THE CRAFT OF BOOK PRODUCTION

**Introduction to Typography.** By OLIVER SIMON. *Faber.* 12*s.* 6*d.* net.

The publisher who accepts a book to-day can give the author no idea of its possible publication-date, for shortage of labour and machines in the printing and binding trades imposes delays of anything up to a year. But at any rate he can start designing it. As a rule the layman is ignorant of the mysteries of typography—of "rightly disposing printing material in accordance with specific purpose; of so arranging the letters, distributing the space and controlling the type as to aid to the maximum the reader's comprehension of the text" (to quote Mr. Stanley Morison's definition). Yet to readers of discrimination the aesthetic appearance of a book is of great importance. So, first, from the wide range of well-designed type-faces made available to printers by the Monotype Corporation—to whom we all owe a debt of gratitude—one must be chosen, suited to the subject-matter. The size of the type in relation to the requisite number of pages and of lines on a page must be decided. Then title-page, chapter-headings, and headlines must be considered, and in some books illustrations, glossary, and index; and, finally, the binding and jacket. If the book is poetry or a play, expert knowledge is required to ensure that the text is displayed to the best advantage. In recent years increasing attention has been paid to "design in industry"; and nowhere are craftsmen more necessary than in book production.

Twenty years ago, in *The Truth about Publishing*, soon to appear in a new and revised edition, Mr. (now Sir) Stanley Unwin wrote: "The firms which specialise in book printing may be divided roughly into three classes: (1) The creative printers . . .; (2) the competent, but usually uninspired; (3) the incompetent, but cheap. In the first category I should place such a firm as the Curwen Press, whose standard of work is a shining example." Mr. Oliver Simon has been associated with the Curwen Press for a quarter of a century, and there could be no better guide. In *Introduction to Typography* he discusses, with examples from actual books, every aspect of the subject, and shows how legibility combined with beauty can best be attained. He is, of course, an idealist. He talks of the improvements that can be made in the spelling, punctuation, etc., of the MS by an experienced press reader, "who should also be responsible for checking dates, titles, place-names, historical characters, etc.," and quotes the author on a book on typography as saying that "it is the duty of the printer to supplement the negligences of the writer." Some years before the recent war the press reader of a well-known firm of London printers earned the grateful (if surprised) appreciation of both Mr. Winston Churchill and a professor of London University for his scholarly queries on MSS by these two eminent historians. But few printers to-day are able to offer such expert service. In fact, it is the publisher who is primarily responsible for his author's MS, and every publisher of standing should—and in many cases obviously does not—employ editorial readers to check MSS and prepare them for the printer.

Book-jackets are briefly referred to, and portions of several jackets are reproduced in colour, including a characteristic Gollancz red-black-and-yellow, jammed tight with letter-press. Mr. Gollancz was the pioneer in using the jacket as a poster or advertisement, and other publishers imitated him with varying degrees of success; but the effectiveness of this "noisy" style is diminished when it is used too often and on unsuitable books. In the section on binding—and the binding of *Introduction to Typography* is itself a model of good taste—Mr. Simon does not refer to any cover material other than cloth or paper; what prospects are there that some kind of plastic binding may be invented on which lettering could be directly printed?

Somewhat technical though this book may be, it should appeal to bibliophiles generally as well as book-trade and printing circles. In any

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later edition the surname of that fine artist Joan Hassall should be spelt correctly; and while "colophon" is defined in the Glossary as "an inscription at the end of a book often including the printer's imprint and a note of details of production," Mr. Simon might mention that the term is also used in the book trade to denote the publisher's house sign or device, usually found on a book's title-page.

GEORGE KAMM

## RUSSIAN DANCERS

**Soviet Ballet.** By IRIS MORLEY. *Collins*, 15s.

Remarkably little has been published so far about Russian ballet in its native environment. Miss Morley's book is timely; and it contains some delightful descriptions and photographs of old ballets in new settings and of new ballets we hope to see. This and the portrait sketches of the ballerinas, as well as the useful though scanty information given of the organisation of the Bolshoy Theatre, will help to inform us about Soviet ballet. But this book does not entirely fill the gap in our knowledge, nor is it without faults. The author is aware of some of these, and qualifies her work as "a reporter's book," and some of the shortcomings must be mentioned here.

The book omits the home of ballet, Leningrad, neglects the distinct ballet of the Stanislavsky Theatre, and fails to stress the existence of a subsidiary Bolshoy Theatre—the parallel would be if Covent Garden and Drury Lane were at the disposal of one and the same large company. The peculiarities of Soviet decor are not explained, nor is there any appreciation of the work of the leading artist, Williams. And the critic "Golubov," much quoted by Miss Morley, is not discoverable in print since he writes under the *nom de plume* of Potapov. There is a lack of clarity, too, in the author's attempt to trace the evolution of the Soviet ballet since the 1920s; and I suspect that the critic Pisarev, who is quoted as a contemporary, is really the 19th-century realist critic. The revision of the graveyard scene in *Giselle* (1944) is explained on the grounds of "anti-mysticism," an old controversy, whereas a more immediate reason suggests itself in the wish to tone down the emotional effect of this scene, as originally produced, on a wartime audience only too conscious of personal losses at the front.

The Soviet ballet of to-day is the product of those reforms in the 1930s which affected the whole of Soviet life. In the world of art they implied the exorcising of "modernist" trends and their replacement by a classical-realist tradition. In the ballet this tradition has since produced *The Fountain of Bakhshisaray*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Crimson Sails* and *Cinderella*. It has also restored ballet on a sound classical foundation and on a solid classical repertoire. This may appear boring to some who remember Diaghilev's fireworks, but the conditions which made them possible are no longer operative.

Our English ballet cannot at present compete with the classical virtuosity of the large-scale Bolshoy Theatre; and its more typical productions like *Hamlet* and *The Mystery at Gorbals* would savour of "distortion" to Russian taste. But the Soviet ballet is not at a standstill either, although the time taken for rehearsal makes it slow. It will probably not wish to reveal itself abroad until it has worked out an imposing post-war programme. In the meantime a first, though personal, *rapprochement* is taking place, for Prokhorova (Plate XLVIII in the book) is dancing at Covent Garden in the new ballet season.

GEORGE REAVEY

**The "Evening News" Saturday Reflections.** *Skeffington.* 8s. 6d.

For just on twelve years the *Evening News* has carried a miniature sermon every Saturday. These have all been written by one anonymous author, a layman we are told. The feat is remarkable, for this homilist never falls into the muddle-headedness and sentimentality that usually make popular religious journalism so disgusting. He quotes from an extraordinary variety of authors, and his book can be recommended as a present for a devout relation.

## GRAMOPHONE NOTES

SIBELIUS: *Violin Concerto.* Ginette Neveu with Philharmonic Orch., cond. Süsskind (H.M.V. DB6244–7).

SIBELIUS: *Karelia Suite.* B.B.C. Symphony Orch., cond. Beecham (H.M.V. DB6248).

WALTON: *Sinfonia Concertante.* Phyllis Sellick with City of Birmingham Orch., cond. Weldon (H.M.V. C3478–80).

FALLA: *Nights in the Gardens of Spain.* Clifford Curzon with National Symphony Orch., cond. Enrique Jorda (Decca 1158–60).

WEBER: *Euryanthe Overture.* National Symphony Orch., cond. Rankl (Decca K1154).

PURCELL: *Chaconne in G minor.* Philharmonic String Orch., cond. Lambert (Col. DX1230).

DELIUS: *The Walk to the Paradise Garden.* Hallé Orch., cond. Barbirolli (H.M.V. C3484).

ALFVEN: *Midsummer Watch.* Stockholm Concert Society Orch., cond. Nils Grevillius (H.M.V. C3482–3).

MOZART: *Overture: "Die Entführung aus dem Serail."* London Philharmonic Orch., cond. Beecham (H.M.V. DB6251).

BRITTEN: *Serenade.* Peter Pears and Dennis Brain, with Boyd Neel String Orch., cond. Britten (Decca K1151–3).

BRITTEN: *Ceremony of Carols.* The Morriston Boys' Choir, with Marie Korchinska (Harp) (Decca K1155–7).

SCHUBERT: *Romanze* from "Rosamunde," and *Die Forelle.* Elisabeth Schumann, acc. Gerald Moore (H.M.V. DA1852).

GOUNOD: *Quand tu Chantes*, and *Au Rossignol.* Pierre Bernac, acc. Poulenc (H.M.V. DB6250).

MENDELSSOHN: *Hear my Prayer.* Derek Barsham, with High Wycombe Orpheus Male Voice Choir (Decca K1111).

FIELD: *Nocturnes in E minor and E major.* Denis Matthews (Col. DX1228).

CHOPIN: *Nocturne No. 4 in F*, and *Etudes No. 25 in F minor and No. 27 in A flat.* Harriet Cohen (Col. DX1231).

One notices with satisfaction that a continuous effort is at last being made to put the best modern British music on record. Apart from the works listed above, there is news that Michael Tippett's Second String Quartet may appear soon, and it is to be hoped that his recent Symphony may follow before long. But while all this is to the good, it would seem only fair that some other British composers, who have so far gone unrecorded, should receive attention. I am thinking especially of Gerald Finzi, whose gracious cantata, *Dies Natalis*, should record easily and have a wide appeal among people of cultivated musical taste; and Lennox Berkeley, whose *Divertimento* has a melodious charm, a lightness and clarity of texture, which distinguish all the work of this highly individual composer. And while I am on the subject of desiderata I should like to claim the companies' attention for a number of fine works the lack of which makes a nasty hole in the repertoire of recorded classics available in this country. Haydn's Symphony No. 98 in B flat is a case in point; this is the fourth of the "London"

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symphonies and is on the highest level of Haydn's art. Then there are the Mozart Piano Concertos: nearly all those belonging to the authentic canon are available in excellent recordings, but three are missing: K413 in F, K415 in C, and K451 in D. Even if these are inferior in quality to their more famous brothers, they are too full of good things to be completely ignored, and in any case it is desirable that the set should be completed. Even more important, from a purely musical point of view, are the two early Cello Sonatas of Beethoven (op. 5, in F and G minor). These have indeed been recorded, the first by Casals and Horszowski, the second by Piatigorsky and Schnabel; the latter has unfortunately been deleted, the former (for some mysterious reason) never issued in this country, though I suspect that it was made here. Why are we not allowed to have it, since it is an extremely dignified work and—judging from the issues made by the same duo of the Sonatas op. 102—the performance and recording are likely to be splendid? No doubt an integral recording of Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet* symphony is out of the question, but I have never been able to understand why, although the *Tristesse and Fête* and the *Queen Mab Scherzo* have each of them been issued twice, the *Love Scene*, which is the core of the symphony and contains its best music, continues to be neglected. Will not H.M.V. invite one of the visiting French conductors to record this exquisite movement, which should go on to two or three sides? To revert to contemporary music, any recording company would earn the undying gratitude of all serious musicians if it risked the unpopular gesture of issuing the last four String Quartets of Bartok. I believe one or two of these have been recorded in the States, but only No. 2 is available here at present. However widely individual opinions of Bartok's music may vary, there can, I think, be no question of the paramount importance of these quartets, regarded as a corpus of thoughtful, inventive, and masterly composition. Single performances of course help, but what we really need is to have these works always on tap, for above all they require to be *learnt*.

The young Danish Lieder-singer, Aksel Schiotz, lately visited this country and made some broadcasts, from which it was apparent that he has all the rare qualities needed to interpret this kind of music. It is surely desirable that some of his records, issued on the Continent, should be put on sale here; and I hope it is true that he has recorded for us Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, to which his style is ideally suited and of which no satisfactory set is at present available?

After carefully comparing the new issue of the Sibelius Violin Concerto with the Heifetz set, I have come to the conclusion that the former is distinctly preferable. Mlle Neveu may not have quite so consummate a technique as Heifetz (compare especially the high passage in sixths in the first movement), but her reading of the solo part strikes me as altogether finer and more delicately felt. She takes the whole work a good deal slower than Heifetz, and the corresponding gain in expressiveness and intensity is considerable, except perhaps in the Finale, where Heifetz's furious tempo, I consider, interprets more exactly the mercurial nature of the music. The orchestral part, again, is here performed (and recorded) with the most beautiful care, so that not a detail is lost. No doubt some tastes will continue to prefer the Heifetz recording, but in my opinion this is one of the rare examples of a justified duplication. Of the other Sibelius record this month it is impossible to speak very highly, since the musical interest of the *Karelia* interludes is of the slenderest. The brass build-up is very spectacular, of course, though whether many gramophones will "take" the climaxes pleasingly I greatly doubt.

The revised version of Walton's *Sinfonia Concertante* dispenses with the Cor Anglais, Bass Clarinet, Double Bassoon, and two Trumpets included in the original score, slightly reduces the percussion, and greatly simplifies the piano part. The gain seems to my ear questionable, particularly as the rest of the revision consists largely in transferring phrases from the soloist to the orchestra, and vice versa. The work itself is a light-weight and will appeal especially to those who prefer the composer in his *Façade* mood. It is witty and sparkling and briskly played, though the recording is not always as clear as it should be.

The new and much needed issue of *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* must, I think, be regarded as Decca's masterpiece. I know few recordings more luscious and sensuously beautiful, and at the same time more brilliant, than this. Both Clifford Curzon and the distinguished Spanish conductor, Enrique Jorda, must be congratulated, the one on the vividness and poetry of his performance, the other on the mastery with which he has brought out all the variety of colour in this wonderful score. Readers will scarcely need to be told that this piece belongs among the comparatively few perfect works produced by the Impressionist era in music. For sheer beauty of sound it bears comparison with Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe*, and this set does it full justice. It would be a graceful act of homage to the ageing composer if Decca were to follow up this issue with a recording of *Psyché*, that curious and most moving piece for soprano and chamber ensemble, which is one of Falla's last works. It is a tragedy that one of the most discreetly original composers of our day should have been silent for so long. Rumours reach us of a cantata on the subject of Atlantis, on which Falla has apparently been engaged for many years; but nothing is said about the probability of its completion.

Karl Rankl secures an agreeably enthusiastic performance of the overture to *Euryanthe*, and the famous pianissimo passage, half way through, is beautifully sustained and true. But the upper strings are rather thin and shrill, and they compete unsuccessfully with the brass in passages which demand a richer tone from the whole orchestra.

The Purcell is an arrangement of No. 6 of the "Ten Sonatas in Four Parts." This superb piece deserves to be at least as famous as the "Golden" Sonata which belongs to the same set but which is inferior in emotional intensity. If doubts remain in anyone's mind as to Purcell's consummate musicianship, they will be dispelled by this *Chaconne*. In rhythmical invention, in harmonic daring, in melodic ingenuity, it equals any work of the kind in existence. Mr. Lambert's conducting displays his awareness of all the many subtleties of the piece.

The old Beecham recording of the Delius interlude, though good enough in its day and still quite agreeable to listen to, could now be superseded, for the surface is poor and the recording seems unrealistic by the latest standards. But the new disc is a disappointment: both the climaxes (admittedly very difficult to reproduce on the gramophone) are much too heavily recorded for even the most omnivorous of radiograms, and the orchestral tone throughout is unpleasantly raw. Those who possess the Beecham disc are advised to hold on to it for the present.

Hugo Alfvén is a mildly romantic composer, his music not unlike Svendsen's in general character. *Midsummer Watch* is a genre piece of considerable charm, dominated by Scandinavian dance rhythms (part of it is based on an actual folk tune). The freshness of this little tone poem, its clear and vivid orchestration, will recommend it to many people, especially perhaps to those who prefer music to be simple in construction. The recording is extremely good.

The performance of the *Seraglio* overture is extremely neat and lively, the recording not particularly refined. Dynamic contrasts as violent as this are very hard on the ear.

Britten's *Serenade* is an ideal set as regards the performance. The recording, though in many respects excellent, is rather lacking in "atmosphere," and the *fortissimi* have not all been allowed sufficient weight, particularly in the Elegy, where the Double Basses are not nearly ponderous enough to carry out the sinister intention of the passage, and in the fugal accompaniment to the Dirge. With regard to the *Ceremony of Carols*, I will not repeat here what I have

*To be published 8 March*

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already said in the leaflet which accompanies the set. The texture of this mysteriously touching work is perfectly transparent, and the balance is well achieved, since no attempt has (luckily) been made to mitigate the shrillness of the voices, which is here entirely in place.

Mme Schumann has never sung more entrancingly or in better style, and the charming *Romanze* is seldom heard. Her voice floats beautifully above Gerald Moore's impeccable accompaniment.

Gounod's Serenade is everything that is best in salon music: graceful, beautifully made, infinitely pretty. It is also notoriously difficult to sing; but M. Bernac executes the florid voice part with a fluent legato that is a joy to listen to. That *Au Rossignol* is an extremely dull song should not deter anyone from acquiring this disc.

I shall leave the comparison of Derek Barsham and Ernest Lough to addicts of the male soprano, merely observing that in the later rendering the solo voice, which is sweet and pure at the beginning of "Hear my Prayer," becomes disappointingly feeble in "O for the Wings." The choir has a fierce echo.

"Le Midi" seems an unsuitable enough title for a nocturne, but the piece is in fact charmingly fresh and innocent. The E minor Nocturne amounts to rather more and is, besides, interestingly Chopinesque. Denis Matthews plays both in excellent style, and the recording is very faithful. Incidentally, I wish recording companies would make it a rule to print on all piano (solo or concerto) records the make of instrument which is being used. Pianos differ so very widely in tone-quality that it is of real importance, in judging a pianist's interpretation, to know what kind of instrument he chooses to play.

I must leave discussion of Miss Harriet Cohen's disc until next month, as it raises a number of points (chiefly of interpretation) for which I have no room here.

EDWARD SACKVILLE WEST

## Week-end Competitions

### No. 839

**Set by Critic**

Early in the war (I told this story in the London Diary at the time on the authority of a well-known Chinese official), an air-raid warden knocked at the door of a house in a disreputable street and complained to the woman who opened it that there was "a chink showing in a window upstairs." The woman said: "Oh no, Sir, it's not, really. It's a gentleman from the Japanese Embassy."

The usual prizes are offered for stories, to be told in not more than 100 words, which, like the above, are true or near true, and which arise and are only capable of arising, from conditions in the late war. Entries by March 5th.

## RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 836

**Set by V. S. Pritchett**

A revival of belief in the Devil, or Pure Evil, is becoming evident in religious and moral controversy. The usual prizes are offered for a polemical limerick on the subject.

**Report by V. S. Pritchett**

A warm affection for the Devil is evident from the enormous entry to this competition; and failure to scan—that endearing fault of the family limerick—only happened once. Wm. Bliss complained that metaphysics do not lend themselves to the limerick; but it was evident from a large number of entries that the antics of Mr. C. S. Lewis and the intuitions of M. de Rougemont have changed all that. And what about the being who moved "in predestinate grooves"? Pure Evil is fun and Satan has come to roost in the home of lost causes. Long live the shiny cult of the Sins of Society, though the opera-hat is now replaced by the mortar-board. One Irish entry took a line of its own. I print it together with an inevitably arbitrary selection from a mass of amusing stuff. I suggest prizes of 12*s.* each for M. Cassel, H. M., Little Billee, Wm. Bliss, J. S. Y., D. D., W. J. Strachan, D. W. Payn, J. B. Press, L. E. J.

The Devil's no longer a myth!
But has taken the surname of Smith,
And become a good sort,
A sahib, a sport,
A chap we're all intimate with!

The Devil, who plays a deep part,
Has tricked his way into your heart,
By a simple insistence
On his own non-existence—
Which really is devilish smart!

LITTLE BILLEE

There once was a Scot who said "Evil
Is a relic of thoughts mediaeval.
Those tales of Auld Nick
And his power make me sick;
It's jist being Guid that's the deevil.

H. M.

Said Nick: "Mister Lewis and me
Is the best pals that ever was, see!
We both has our loyalties,
We both shares the royalties;
I've a very warm corner for he!"

M. CASSEL

Down in Dublin Old Dev. is a Swell,
Whom they'd all like to meet very well:
But in Belfast Old Dev.
Is a useful abbrev.
For a gent. they will meet down in hell.

J. S. Y.

Said an elderly Bishop named Greville,
At a secret episcopal revel:
"We're distressingly bored
With the words of the Lord,
And so let us discourse on the Devil."

D. D.

Said a parson, addressing his flock:
So-called Progress is in for a shock.
We've *intuitive* proofs
Of a Devil—with hoofs—
Which will put back the clock before Locke!

W. J. STRACHAN

A modern young curate called Hyde
Will be pleased if the Bishops decide
That to govern a see
One must hold a degree
In Evil, both pure and applied.

D. W. PAYN

Lord, since it is hard to explain,
By reason, the problem of pain,
Assist us to revel
In talk of the Devil
And spare us the use of the brain.

J. B. PRESS

"The conception," an Archbishop said,
"Of a *personal* Tempter is dead."
But a meek little curate
Begged leave to demur: it
Was something he fought with in bed.

L. E. J.

The possession by man of his free-will
Presupposes both God and the Devil,
For the goodness of Good
Cannot be understood,
Unless there's an opposite Evil.

If no Pain were, how judge we of Pleasure?
If no Work, where's the solace of Leisure?
What's White, if no Black,
What's Wealth, if no Lack?
If no Loss, how our Gain could we measure?

When Man loses his faith theological,
He at once becomes demonological;
The Nazi Gestapo
Has proved this—*da capo*—
To all but the crassly illogical!

WILLIAM BLISS


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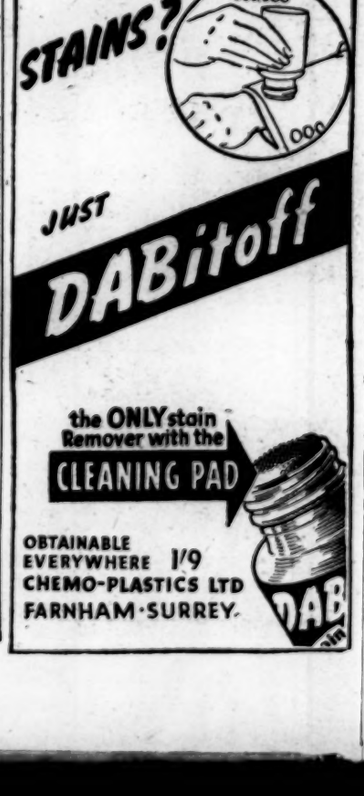

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QUEEN'S University of Belfast. Applics. invited for the undermentioned permanent appointments :—Sub-Librarian : salary, £460 x £25—£500 p.a. Three Assistant Librarians : salary, £275–£325 (according to qualifics. and exper.) x £25—£400 p.a. All posts pensionable under F.S.S.U. Candidates must be grads. of a British University with prof. qualifics. and/or exp. Six copies of applics. with not more than three recent testims., and names of three referees should be sent to reach the Librarian by March 16th. Further partics. may be obtained from Librarian. Candidates serving abroad may apply by cablegram giving names of three referees.

UNIVERSITY of Durham, King's College, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Board of Extra-Mural Studies. Applics. invited for post of full-time Staff Tutor to Extra-Mural Classes at a commencing salary of £400 to £500 p.a., according to qualifics. and exp. Twelve copies of applics., with names of not more than three referees, by March 16th, to G. R. Hanson, Registrar of King's College, from whom further partics. may be obtained.

RUSKIN College, Oxford—Vice-Principal. Salary £625 p.a., rising to £725, and membership of Superan. Scheme. Successful applicant will be required to take up duties on October 1st. Applics. should have exp. of Adult Educ. Candidates due for demob. from H.M. Services will be considered. Applic. form (returnable by March 30th) and further partics. from Secretary, Ruskin College, Oxford.

THE Glasgow and West of Scotland Commercial College (Central Institution for Higher Commercial Educ.). Governors invite applics. for post of Principal of College which will shortly become vacant. Commencing salary will not be less than £1,150 p.a., rising by annual increments of £50 to a maximum of £1,400. Candidates should possess a suitable Univ. degree, or equivalent, with exp. in lecturing and organisation of an educ. establishment. Practical exp. in commercial life would be a recommendation. Candidates should be not more than 45 but others with special qualifics., of not over 48 years of age, may be considered. Successful applicant must be prepared to begin duties on August 1st. Twelve copies of Letter of Application and Testimonials to be lodged by March 29th, with the Secretary from whom further information and partics. of post may be obtained. A. W. Middleton, Secretary, 173 Pitt St., Glasgow, C.2.

NATIONAL Library of Wales. Applics. invited for appointment as Class I Assistants (men) in Dept. of Manuscripts and Records. Applics. must be univ. grads. and should possess a good honours degree, pref. in Latin or History. Sound knowledge of Welsh essen. Salary ranges from £350 to £600 p.a. Applics., giving full partics. of academic qualifics. and previous exp (if any), with two/more recent testims. or refs., to Librarian, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, by March 16th.

B.B.C. invites applics. from men and women, British only, for posts as Sub-Editors in Monitoring Service at Caversham. Essential qualifics. an interest in international affairs and ability to revise, rewrite and summarise quickly and accurately. Candidates must be prepared to work on a shift basis. Salary max. £600 p.a. rising to £800 p.a., plus cost of living bonus £44 p.a. and family allowances. Appointment to unestab. staff; entry to permanent staff subject to later consideration. Applics. with details of age and exp. to Appointments Officer, Broadcasting House, London, W.1 by Mar. 2nd. Mark envs. "Monitoring Sub-Editors."

### Appointments—continued

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Education Committee. Applics. invited for post of County Librarian. Candidates must hold an approved Library Diploma; A University Degree will be an additional qualific. Beginning salary £450 p.a., rising by annual increments of £20 to a maximum of £550 p.a., plus bonus (Men : £59 16s.; Women : £48 2s.). Further partics. and application forms, which should be returned by March 5th (on receipt of a stamped addressed foolscap env.) from Chief Educ. Officer, Shire Hall, Cambridge.

HERTFORDSHIRE County Council. Applics. invited for post of Warden of South Watford Civic Club, a newly-formed Community Centre with a membership of approx. 250. Duties of Warden will include supervision and organisation of Club and development of social and educ. activities. Exp. in Community Centre or similar work desirable. Salary in accordance with Burnham Scale. Applics. (no forms issued) stating age, educ., qualifics. and exp., with names of two referees to County Educ. Officer, County Hall, Hertford, by March 23rd.

INTERNATIONAL Voluntary Service for Peace. To develop present opportunities at home and abroad additional admin. workers, particularly shorthand typists needed immediately. Volunteers (pocket money and maintenance basis) reqd. in Leeds and London. Details from 1 Lyddon Terrace, Leeds, 2.

THE National Peace Council is to appoint an officer to conduct an extended Information section to meet post-war opportunities. Necessary qualifics are (*a*) sympathy with a radical and constructive approach to peace problems, (*b*) wide knowledge of international affairs and (*c*) capacity to collate and present information accurately and readably. Applics. (which must be accompanied by two refs.) and enqs. should be marked "Appointment" and sent to Director, N.P.C., 144, Southampton Row, London, W.C.1.

WANTED in May : English specialist able organise subject throughout school. Library. Dramatics. Recognised school. 100 pupils, 5–17. Miss M. S. Brooks, M.A., Hall School, Bratton Seymour, Wincanton, Som.

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TEACHER, Froebel or similar, group 5–7's wanted now or May. Country co-ed. boarding school. Beverley School, Wolfelee, nr. Hawick, Scotland.

WANTED : Teacher, Froebel/similar, for either group 5–7's or group 8–11's, and student, resident, to assist in Nursery/Kindergarten, valuable exp. prior to college training. Country Co-ed. boarding school, Beverley School, Nr. Hawick, Scotland.

KINDERGARTEN teacher wanted. Modern training and love of young children essential. Apply, Mrs. E. Paul, St. Mary's Town and Country School, 38 Eton Avenue, N.W.3. Pri. 4306.

### Appointments—continued

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CAPABLE ex-W.R.N.S. (23) seeks position—receptionist doctor, dentist, hotel. Leadbetter, 57 Morton Way, N. 14.

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